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New Latin American Cinema

Volume One

Theory, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations

Edited by
MICHAEL T. MARTIN

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS • DETROIT

New Latin American Cinema

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01 00 99 98 97 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

New Latin American cinema / edited by Michael T. Martin.
p. cm. — (Contemporary film and television series)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Contents: v. 1. Theory, practices, and transcontinental articulations — v. 2. Studies of national cinemas.
ISBN 0–8143–2705–2 (alk. paper) ISBN 0–8143–2585–8 (pbk. : alk. paper)—ISBN 0–8143–2706-0) (alk. paper) ISBN 0–8143–2586–6 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Motion pictures—Latin America—History. 2. Motion pictures—Social aspects—Latin America. 3. Motion pictures—Political aspects—Latin America. I. Martin, Michael T. II. Series.
PN1993.5.L3N48 1997
791.43'098—dc21 96–46741
CIP

For my mother

For the native, objectivity is always directed against him.
Frantz Fanon
Les damnés de la terre, 1961

Art frequently creates a comfortable, self-sufficient world removed from action.
Edmundo Desnoes
"The Photographic Image of Underdevelopment," 1967

We understand what cinema's social function should be in Cuba in these times:
It should contribute in the most effective way possible to elevating viewer's revolutionary consciousness and to arming them for the ideological struggle which they have to wage against all kinds of reactionary tendencies and it should also contribute to their enjoyment of life.
Tomás Gutiérrez Alea
The Viewer's Dialectic, 1988

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Preface

The essays, interviews, and programmatic statements collected here are devoted to the study of a theorized, dynamic, and unfinished Latin American cinematic movement. In challenging the "history of cinematic representation," the New Latin American Cinema movement is at once national and continental. Its practices reverberate throughout the First World as well as other regions of the Third World. Parented by the continent's colonial experience and forged by its continuing underdevelopment and dependency, the movement has inscribed itself in Latin Americans' struggles for national and continental autonomy.

This collection is deployed in two volumes. Volume 1 addresses the formation and continental development of the New Latin American Cinema, its theoretical foundations, thematic and aesthetic concerns, and transcontinental articulations. Contributions by pioneering filmmakers foreground the programmatic writings of the movement as they theorize the practice of an aesthetically and radically alternative cinema. Volume 2 surveys the development of the New Latin American Cinema as a national project. The contents of the volumes include significant but diffusely published essays along with several new and revised essays and interviews. While these writings are varied and extensive, they cannot pretend to exhaust all the perspectives on the subject under study. To the contrary, revisionist and other perspectives will no doubt emerge as the movement's first three decades become increasingly historicized and reassessed by film scholars and critics alike.

The volumes are intended to achieve two principal objectives. First, they serve as a basic reference tool for the study of Third World cinema in general and Latin American cinema in particular; and as primary reader/texts for faculty and students in film, cultural, and Third World studies courses. As such, readers can easily avail themselves of critical writings which first appeared in journals and monographs of limited circulation.

This collection's second objective is to map and account for the movement's diversity and innovativeness in order to explicate the socio-historical and cultural contexts of its development. In so doing, the editor hopes to invite larger debates about identity, nation, and devel-

Part I
Theorizing Political/ Aesthetic Trajectories

Towards a Third Cinema

Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World

Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino

. . . we must discuss, we must invent . . .

Frantz Fanon

Just a short time ago it would have seemed like a Quixotic adventure in the colonized, neocolonized, or even the imperialist nations themselves to make any attempt to create *films of decolonization* that turned their back on or actively opposed the System. Until recently, film had been synonymous with spectacle or entertainment: in a word, it was one more *consumer good.* At best, films succeeded in bearing witness to the decay of bourgeois values and testifying to social injustice. As a rule, films only dealt with effect, never with cause; it was cinema of mystification or anti-historicism. It was *surplus value* cinema. Caught up in these conditions, films, the most valuable tool of communication of our times, were destined to satisfy only the ideological and economic interests of the *owners of the film industry*, the lords of the world film market, the great majority of whom were from the United States.

Was it possible to overcome this situation? How could the problem of turning out liberating films be approached when costs came to

Michael Chanan, ed., *Twenty-Five Years of New Latin American Cinema.* London: British Film Institute, 1983, pp. 17–27. First published in *Tricontinental* (Havana, Cuba). By permission of the editor, Michael Chanan.

several thousand dollars and the distribution and exhibition channels were in the hands of the enemy? How could the continuity of work be guaranteed? How could the public be reached? How could System-imposed repression and censorship be vanquished? These questions, which could be multiplied in all directions, led and still lead many people to skepticism or rationalization: "revolutionary cinema cannot exist before the revolution"; "revolutionary films have been possible only in the liberated countries"; "without the support of revolutionary political power, revolutionary cinema or art is impossible." The mistake was due to taking the same approach to reality and films as did the bourgeoisie. The models of production, distribution, and exhibition continued to be *those of Hollywood* precisely because, in ideology and politics, films had not yet become the vehicle for a clearly drawn differentiation between bourgeois ideology and politics. A reformist policy, as manifested in dialogue with the adversary, in coexistence, and in the relegation of national contradictions to those between two supposedly unique blocs—the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A.—was and is unable to produce anything but a cinema within the System itself. At best, it can be the *"progressive" wing of Establishment cinema.* When all is said and done, such cinema was doomed to wait until the world conflict was resolved peacefully in favor of socialism in order to change qualitatively. The most daring attempts of those filmmakers who strove to conquer the fortress of official cinema ended, as Jean-Luc Godard eloquently put it, with the filmmakers themselves "trapped inside the fortress."

But the questions that were recently raised appeared promising; they arose from a new historical situation to which the filmmaker, as is often the case with the educated strata of our countries, was rather a late-comer: ten years of the Cuban Revolution, the Vietnamese struggle, and the development of a worldwide liberation movement whose moving force is to be found in the Third World countries. *The existence of masses on the worldwide revolutionary plane was the substantial fact without which those questions could not have been posed.* A new historical situation and a new man born in the process of the anti-imperialist struggle demanded a new, revolutionary attitude from the filmmakers of the world. The question of whether or not militant cinema *was possible* before the revolution began to be replaced, at least within small groups, by the question of *whether or not such a cinema was necessary to contribute to the possibility of revolution.* An affirmative answer was the starting point for the first attempts to channel the process of seeking possibilities in numerous countries. Examples are Newsreel, a U.S. New Left film group, the *cinegiornali* of the Italian student movement, the films made by the *Etats Généraux du Cinéma Français*, and those of the British and Japanese student movements, all a continuation and deepening of the work of a Joris Ivens or a Chris Marker. Let it suffice to observe the films of a Santiago Alvarez in Cuba, or the cinema being developed by different filmmakers in 'the homeland of all," as Bolivar would say, as they seek a revolutionary Latin American cinema.

A profound debate on the role of intellectuals and artists before liberation is today enriching the perspectives of intellectual work all over the world. However, this debate oscillates between two poles: one which proposes to *relegate* all intellectual work capacity to a *specifically* political or political-military function, denying perspectives to all artistic activity with the idea that such activity must ineluctably be absorbed by the System, and the other which maintains an inner duality of the intellectual: on the one hand, the "work of art," "the privilege of beauty," an art and a beauty which are not necessarily bound to the needs of the revolutionary political process, and, on the other, a political commitment which generally consists in signing certain anti-imperialist manifestos. In practice, this point of view means the *separation of politics and art.*

This polarity rests, as we see it, on two omissions: first, the conception of culture, science, art, and cinema as univocal and universal terms, and, second, an insufficiently clear idea of the fact that the revolution does not begin with the taking of political power from imperialism and the bourgeoisie, but rather begins at the moment when the masses sense the need for change and their intellectual vanguards begin to study and carry out this change *through activities on different fronts.*

Culture, art, science, and cinema always respond to conflicting class interests. In the neocolonial situation two concepts of culture, art, science, and cinema compete: *that of the rulers and that of the nation.* And this situation will continue, as long as the national concept is not identified with that of the rulers, as long as the status of colony or semi-colony continues in force. Moreover, the duality will be overcome and will reach a single and universal category only when the best values of man emerge from proscription to achieve hegemony, when the liberation of man is universal. In the meantime, there exist *our* culture and *their* culture, *our* cinema and *their* cinema. Because our culture is an impulse towards emancipation, it will remain in existence until emancipation is a reality: *a culture of subversion* which will carry with it an art, a science, and *a cinema of subversion.*

The lack of awareness in regard to these dualities generally leads the intellectual to deal with artistic and scientific expressions as they were "universally conceived" by the classes that rule the world, at

best introducing some correction into these expressions. We have not gone deeply enough into developing a revolutionary theatre, architecture, medicine, psychology, and cinema; into developing a culture *by and for us*. The intellectual takes each of these forms of expression as a unit to be corrected *from within the expression itself, and not from without, with its own new methods and models.*

An astronaut or a Ranger mobilizes all the scientific resources of imperialism. Psychologists, doctors, politicians, sociologists, mathematicians, and even artists are thrown into the study of everything that serves, *from the vantage point of different specialities*, the preparation of an orbital flight or the massacre of Vietnamese; in the long run, all of these specialities are equally employed to satisfy the needs of imperialism. In Buenos Aires the army eradicates *villas miseria* (urban shanty towns) and in their place puts up "strategic hamlets" with town planning aimed at facilitating military intervention when the time comes. The revolutionary organizations lack specialized fronts not only in *their* medicine, engineering, psychology, and art—but also in *our own revolutionary* engineering, psychology, art, and cinema. In order to be effective, all these fields must recognize the *priorities* of each stage: those required by the struggle for power or those demanded by the already victorious revolution. Examples: creating a political sensitivity to the need to undertake a political-military struggle in order to take power: developing a medicine to serve the needs of combat in rural or urban zones; co-ordinating energies to achieve a 10 million ton sugar harvest as they attempted in Cuba; or elaborating an architecture, a city planning, that will be able to withstand the massive air raids that imperialism can launch at any time. The specific strengthening of each speciality and field subordinate to collective priorities can fill the empty spaces caused by the struggle for liberation and can delineate with greatest efficacy the role of the intellectual in our time. It is evident that revolutionary mass-level culture and awareness can only be achieved after the taking of political power, but it is no less true that the use of scientific and artistic means, together with political-military means, prepares the terrain for the revolution to become reality and facilitates the solution of the problems that will arise with the taking of power.

The intellectual must find through his action the field in which he can rationally perform the most efficient work. Once the front has been determined, his next task is to find out *within that front* exactly what is the enemy's stronghold and where and how he must deploy his forces. It is in this harsh and dramatic daily search that a culture of the revolution will be able to emerge, the basis which will nurture, *beginning right now*, the *new man* exemplified by Che—not man in

the abstract, not the "liberation of man," *but another man*, capable of arising from the ashes of the old, alienated man that we are and which the new man will destroy—by starting to stoke the fire *today*.

The anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries constitutes today the axis of the world revolution. *Third cinema* is, in our opinion, the cinema that *recognises in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time*, the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point—in a word, the *decolonization of culture*.

The culture, including the cinema, of a neocolonialized country is just the expression of an overall dependence that generates models and values born from the needs of imperialist expansion.

> In order to impose itself, neocolonialism needs to convince the people of a dependent country of their own inferiority. Sooner or later, the inferior man recognizes Man with a capital M; this recognition means the destruction of his defenses. If you want to be a man, says the oppressor, you have to be like me, speak my language, deny your own being, transform yourself into me. As early as the 17th century the Jesuit missionaries proclaimed the aptitude of the [South American] native for copying European works of art. Copyist, translator, interpreter, at best a spectator, the neocolonialized intellectual will always be encouraged to refuse to assume his creative possibilities. Inhibitions, uprootedness, escapism, cultural cosmopolitanism, artistic imitation, metaphysical exhaustion, betrayal of country—all find fertile soil in which to grow.[1]

Culture becomes bilingual.

> . . . not due to the use of two languages but because of the conjuncture of two cultural patterns of thinking. One is national, that of the people, and the other is estranging, that of the classes subordinated to outside forces. The admiration that the upper classes express for the U.S. or Europe is the highest expression of their subjection. With the colonialization of the upper classes the culture of imperialism indirectly introduces among the masses knowledge which cannot be supervised.[2]

Just as they are not masters of the land upon which they walk, the neocolonialized people are not masters of the ideas that envelop them. A knowledge of national reality presupposes going into the web of lies and confusion that arise from dependence. The intellectual is

obliged to *refrain from spontaneous thought*; if he does think, he generally runs the risk of doing so in French or English—never in the language of a culture of his own which, like the process of national and social liberation, is still hazy and incipient. Every piece of data, every concept that floats around us, is part of a framework of mirages that is difficult to take apart.

The native bourgeoisie of the port cities such as Buenos Aires, and their respective intellectual elites, constituted, from the very origins of our history, the transmission belt of neocolonial penetration. Behind such watchwords as "Civilization or barbarism," manufactured in Argentina by Europeanizing liberalism, was the attempt to impose a civilization fully in keeping with the needs of imperialist expansion and the desire to destroy the resistance of the national masses, which were successively called the "rabble," a "bunch of blacks," and "zoological detritus" in our country and "the unwashed hordes" in Bolivia. In this way the ideologists of the semicountries, past masters in "the play of big words, with an implacable, detailed, and rustic universalism,"[3] served as spokesmen of those followers of Disraeli who intelligently proclaimed: "I prefer the rights of the English to the rights of man."

The middle sectors were and are the best recipients of cultural neocolonialism. Their ambivalent class condition, their buffer position between social polarities, and their broader possibilities of access to *civilization* offer imperialism a base of social support which has attained considerable importance in some Latin American countries.

If in an openly colonial situation cultural penetration is the complement of a foreign army of occupation, during certain stages this penetration assumes major priority.

> It serves to institutionalize and give a normal appearance to dependence. The main objective of this cultural deformation is to keep the people from realizing their neocolonialized position and aspiring to change it. In this way educational colonization is an effective substitute for the colonial police.[4]

Mass communications tend to complete the destruction of a national awareness and of a collective subjectivity on the way to enlightenment, a destruction which begins as soon as the child has access to these media, the education and culture of the ruling classes. In Argentina, 26 television channels; one million television sets; more than 50 radio stations; hundreds of newspapers, periodicals, and magazines; and thousands of records, films, etc., join their acculturating role of the colonization of taste and consciousness to the process of neocolonial education which begins in the university. "Mass communications are more effective for neocolonialism than napalm. What is real, true, and rational is to be found on the margin of the law, just as are the people. Violence, crime, and destruction come to be Peace, Order, and Normality."[5] *Truth, then, amounts to subversion.* Any form of expression or communication that tries to show national reality is *subversion.*

Cultural penetration, educational colonization, and mass communications all join forces today in a desperate attempt to absorb, neutralize, or eliminate expression that responds to an attempt at decolonization. Neocolonialism makes a serious attempt to castrate, to digest, the cultural forms that arise beyond the bounds of its own aims. Attempts are made to remove from them precisely what makes them effective and dangerous; in short, it tries to depoliticize them. Or, to put it another way, to separate the cultural manifestation from the fight for national independence.

Ideas such as "Beauty in itself is revolutionary" and "All new cinema is revolutionary" are idealistic aspirations that do not touch the neocolonial condition, since they continue to conceive of cinema, art, and beauty as universal abstractions and not as an integral part of the national processes of decolonization.

Any attempt, no matter how virulent, which does not serve to mobilize, agitate, and politicize sectors of the people, to arm them rationally and perceptibly, in one way or another, for the struggle—is received with indifference or even with pleasure. Virulence, nonconformism, plain rebelliousness, and discontent are just so many more products on the capitalist market; they are *consumer goods.* This is especially true in a situation where *the bourgeoisie is in need of a daily dose of shock and exciting elements of controlled violence*[6]—that is, violence which absorption by the System turns into pure stridency. Examples are the works of a socialist-tinged painting and sculpture which are greedily sought after by the new bourgeoisie to decorate their apartments and mansions; plays full of anger and avant-gardism which are noisily applauded by the ruling classes; the literature of "progressive" writers concerned with semantics and man on the margin of time and space, which gives an air of democratic broadmindedness to the System's publishing houses and magazines; and the cinema of "challenge," of "argument," promoted by the distribution monopolies and launched by the big commercial outlets.

> In reality the area of permitted protest of the System is much greater than the System is willing to admit. This gives the artists the illusion that they are acting "against the system" by going beyond certain narrow limits; they do not realize that even anti-

> System art can be absorbed and utilized by the System, as both a brake and a necessary self-correction.[7]

Lacking an awareness of how to *utilize what is ours for our true liberation*—in a word, lacking *politicization*—all of these "progressive" alternatives come to form the leftist wing of the System, the improvement of its cultural products. They will be doomed to carry out the best work on the left that the right is able to accept today and will thus only serve the survival of the latter. "Restore words, dramatic actions, and images to the places where they can carry out a revolutionary role, where they will be useful, where they will become weapons in the struggle."[8] Insert the work as an original fact in the process of liberation, place it first at the service of life itself, ahead of art; *dissolve aesthetics in the life of society*: only in this way, as Fanon said, can decolonization become possible and culture, cinema, and beauty—at least, what is of greatest importance to us—become *our culture, our films, and our sense of beauty.*

The historical perspectives of Latin America and of the majority of the countries under imperialist domination are headed not towards a lessening of repression but towards an increase. We are heading not for bourgeois-democratic regimes but for dictatorial forms of government. The struggles for democratic freedoms, instead of seizing concessions from the System, move it to cut down on them, given its narrow margin for maneuvering.

The bourgeois-democratic facade caved in some time ago. The cycle opened during the last century in Latin America with the first attempts at self-affirmation of a national bourgeoisie differentiated from the metropolis (examples are Rosas' federalism in Argentina, the Lopez and Francia regimes in Paraguay, and those of Bengido and Balmaceda in Chile) with a tradition that has continued well into our century: national-bourgeois, national-popular, and democratic-bourgeois attempts were made by Cardenas, Yrigoyen, Haya de la Torre, Vargas, Aguirre Cerda, Perón, and Arbenz. But as far as revolutionary prospects are concerned, the cycle has definitely been completed. The lines allowing for the deepening of the historical attempt of each of those experiences today pass through the sectors that understand the continent's situation as one of war and that are preparing, under the force of circumstances, to make that region the Vietnam of the coming decade. A war in which national liberation can only succeed when it is simultaneously postulated as social liberation—socialism as the only valid perspective of any national liberation process.

> At this time in Latin America there is room for neither passivity nor innocence. The intellectual's commitment is measured in terms of risks as well as words and ideas; what he does to further the cause of liberation is what counts. The worker who goes on strike and thus risks losing his job or even his life, the student who jeopardizes his career, the militant who keeps silent under torture: each by his or her action commits us to something much more important than a vague gesture of solidarity.[9]

In a situation in which the "state of law" is replaced by the "state of facts," the intellectual, who is *one more worker*, functioning on a cultural front, must become increasingly radicalized to avoid denial of self and to carry out what is expected of him in our times. The impotence of all reformist concepts has already been exposed sufficiently, not only in politics but also in culture and films—and especially in the latter, *whose history is that of imperialist domination—mainly Yankee.*

While, during the early history (or the prehistory) of the cinema, it was possible to speak of a German, an Italian, or a Swedish cinema clearly differentiated and corresponding to specific national characteristics, today such differences have disappeared. The borders were wiped out along with the expansion of U.S. imperialism and the film model that is imposed: *Hollywood movies.* In our times it is hard to find a film within the field of commercial cinema, including what is known as "author's cinema," in both the capitalist and socialist countries, that manages to avoid the models of Hollywood pictures. The latter have such a fast hold that monumental works such as Bondarchuk's *War and Peace* from the U.S.S.R. are also monumental examples of the submission to all propositions imposed by the U.S. movie industry (structure, language, etc.) and, consequently, to its concepts.

The placing of the cinema within U.S. models, even in the formal aspect, in language, leads to the adoption of the ideological forms that *gave rise to precisely that language and no other.* Even the appropriation of models which appear to be only technical, industrial, scientific, etc., leads to a conceptual dependency, due to the fact that the cinema is an industry, but differs from other industries in that it has been created and organized in order *to generate certain ideologies.* The 35mm camera, 24 frames per second, arc lights, and a commercial place of exhibition for audiences were conceived not to gratuitously transmit any ideology, but to satisfy, in the first place, the cultural and surplus value needs *of a specific ideology, of a specific world-view: that of U.S. finance capital.*

The mechanistic takeover of a cinema conceived as a show to be exhibited in large theatres with a standard duration, hermetic struc-

tures that are born and die on the screen, satisfies, to be sure, the commercial interests of the production groups, but it also leads to the *absorption of forms of the bourgeois world-view* which are the continuation of 19th century art, of bourgeois art: man is accepted only as a passive and consuming object; *rather than having his ability to make history recognized, he is only permitted to read history, contemplate it, listen to it, and undergo it. The cinema as a spectacle aimed at a digesting object is the highest point that can be reached by bourgeois filmmaking*. The world, experience, and the historic process are enclosed within the frame of a painting, the stage of a theater, and the movie screen; man is viewed as a *consumer of ideology*, and not as the creator of ideology. This notion is the starting point for the wonderful interplay of bourgeois philosophy and the obtaining of surplus value. The result is a cinema studied by motivational analysts, sociologists and psychologists, by the endless researchers of the dreams and frustrations of the masses, all aimed at selling *movie-life*, reality as it is conceived by the ruling classes.

The first alternative to this type of cinema, which we could call the *first cinema*, arose with the so- called "author's cinema," "expression cinema," *"nouvelle vague," "cinema novo,"* or, conventionally, the *second cinema*. This alternative signified a step forward inasmuch as it demanded that the filmmaker be free to express himself in nonstandard language and inasmuch as it was an attempt at cultural decolonization. But such attempts have already reached, or are about to reach, the outer limits of what the system permits. The *second cinema filmmaker* has remained "trapped inside the fortress" as Godard put it, or is on his way to becoming trapped. The search for a market of 200,000 moviegoers in Argentina, a figure that is supposed to cover the costs of an independent local production, the proposal of developing a mechanism of industrial production parallel to that of the System but which would be distributed by the System according to its own norms, the struggle to better the laws protecting the cinema and replacing "bad officials" by "less bad," etc., is a search lacking in viable prospects, unless you consider viable the prospect of becoming institutionalized as "the youthful, angry wing of society"—that is, of neocolonialized or capitalist society.

Real alternatives differing from those offered by the System are only possible if one of two requirements is fulfilled: *making films that the System cannot assimilate and which are foreign to its needs, or making films that directly and explicitly set out to fight the System*. Neither of these requirements fits within the alternatives that are still offered by the *second cinema*, but they can be found in the revolutionary opening towards a cinema outside and against the System, in a cinema of liberation: the *third cinema*.

One of the most effective jobs done by neocolonialism is its cutting off of intellectual sectors, especially artists, from national reality by lining them up behind "universal art and models." It has been very common for intellectuals and artists to be found at the tail end of popular struggle, when they have not actually taken up positions against it. The social layers which have made the greatest contribution to the building of a national culture (understood as an impulse towards decolonization) have not been precisely the enlightened elites but rather the most exploited and uncivilized sectors. Popular organizations have very rightly distrusted the "intellectual" and the "artist." When they have not been openly used by the bourgeoisie or imperialism, they have certainly been their indirect tools; most of them did not go beyond spouting a policy in favor of "peace and democracy," fearful of anything that had a national ring to it, afraid of contaminating art with politics and the artists with the revolutionary militant. They thus tended to obscure the inner causes determining neocolonialized society and placed in the foreground the outer causes, which, while "they are the condition for change, can never be the basis for change".[10] in Argentina they replaced the struggle against imperialism and the native oligarchy with the struggle of democracy against fascism, suppressing the fundamental contradiction of a neocolonialized country and replacing it with "a contradiction that was a copy of the world-wide contradiction."[11]

This cutting off of the intellectual and artistic sectors from the processes of national liberation—which, among other things, helps us to understand the limitations in which these processes have been unfolding—today tends to disappear to the extent that artists and intellectuals are beginning to discover the impossibility of destroying the enemy without first joining in a battle for their common interests. The artist is beginning to feel the insufficiency of his nonconformism and individual rebellion. And the revolutionary organizations, in turn, are discovering the vacuums that the struggle for power creates in the cultural sphere. The problems of filmmaking, the ideological limitations of a filmmaker in a neocolonialized country, etc., have thus far constituted objective factors in the lack of attention paid to the cinema by the people's organizations. Newspapers and other printed matter, posters and wall propaganda, speeches and other verbal forms of information, enlightenment, and politicization are still the main means of communication between the organizations and the vanguard layers of the masses. But the new political positions of some filmmakers and the subsequent appearance of films useful for liberation have permit-

ted certain political vanguards to discover the importance of movies. This importance is to be found in the specific meaning of films as a form of communication and because of *their particular characteristics*, characteristics that allow them to draw audiences of different origins, many of them people who might not respond favorably to the announcement of a political speech. Films offer an effective pretext for gathering an audience, in addition to the ideological message they contain.

The capacity for synthesis and the penetration of the film image, the possibilities offered by the *living document*, and *naked reality*, and the power of enlightenment of audiovisual means make the film far more effective than any other tool of communication. It is hardly necessary to point out that those films which achieve an intelligent use of the possibilities of the image, adequate dosage of concepts, language and structure that flow naturally from each theme, and counterpoints of audiovisual narration achieve effective results in the politicization and mobilization of cadres and even in work with the masses, where this is possible.

The students who raised barricades on the Avenida 18 de Julio in Montevideo after the showing of *La hora de los hornos (The Hour of the Furnaces)*, the growing demand for films such as those made by Santiago Alvarez and the Cuban documentary film movement, and the debates and meetings that take place alter the underground or semi-public showings of *third cinema* films are the beginning of a twisting and difficult road being travelled in the consumer societies by the mass organizations (*Cinegiornali liberi* in Italy, Zengakuren documentaries in Japan, etc.). For the first time in Latin America, organizations are ready and willing to employ films for political-cultural ends: the Chilean *Partido Socialista* provides its cadres with revolutionary film material, while Argentine revolutionary Peronist and non-Peronist groups are taking an interest in doing likewise. Moreover, OSPAAAL (Organization of Solidarity of the People of Africa, Asia and Latin America) is participating in the production and distribution of films that contribute to the anti-imperialist struggle. The revolutionary organizations are discovering the need for cadres who, among other things, know how to handle a film camera, tape recorders, and projectors in the most effective way possible. The struggle to seize power from the enemy is the meeting ground of the political and artistic vanguards engaged in a common task which is *enriching to both*.

Some of the circumstances that delayed the use of films as a revolutionary tool until a short time ago were lack of equipment, technical difficulties, the compulsory specialization of each phase of work, and high costs. The advances that have taken place within each specialization; the simplification of movie cameras and tape recorders; improvements in the medium itself, such as rapid film that can be shot in normal light; automatic light meters; improved audiovisual synchronization; and the spread of know-how by means of specialized magazines with large circulations and even through nonspecialized media, have helped to demystify filmmaking and divest it of that almost magic aura that made it seem that films were only within the reach of "artists," "geniuses," and "the privileged." Filmmaking is increasingly within the reach of larger social layers. Chris Marker experimented in France with groups of workers whom he provided with 8mm equipment and some basic instruction in its handling. The goal was to have the worker film *his way of looking at the world, just as if he were writing it*. This has opened up unheard-of prospects for the cinema; above all, *a new conception of filmmaking and the significance of art in our times*.

Imperialism and capitalism, whether in the consumer society or in the neocolonialized country, veil everything behind a screen of images and appearances. *The image of reality* is more important than reality itself. It is a world peopled with fantasies and phantoms in which what is hideous is clothed in beauty, while beauty is disguised as the hideous. On the one hand, fantasy, the imaginary bourgeois universe replete with comfort, equilibrium, sweet reason, order, efficiency, and the possibility to "be someone." And, on the other, the phantoms, we the lazy, we the indolent and underdeveloped, we who cause disorder. When a neocolonialized person accepts his situation, he becomes a Gungha Din, a traitor at the service of the colonialist, an Uncle Tom, a class and racial renegade, or a fool, the easy-going servant and bumpkin; but, when he refuses to accept his situation of oppression, then he turns into a resentful savage, a cannibal. Those who *lose sleep from fear of the hungry*, those who comprise the System, see the revolutionary as a bandit, robber, and rapist; the first battle waged against them is thus not on a political plane, but rather in the police context of law, arrests, etc. The more exploited a man is, the more he is placed on a plane of insignificance. The more he resists, the more he is viewed as a beast. This can be seen in *Africa Addio*, made by the fascist Jacopetti: the African savages, killer animals, wallow in abject anarchy once they escape from white protection. Tarzan died, and in his place were born Lumumbas and Lobegulas, Nkomos, and the Madzimbamutos, and this is something that neocolonialism cannot forgive. Fantasy has been replaced by phantoms and man is turned into an extra who dies so Jacopetti can comfortably film his execution.

I make the revolution; therefore I exist. This is the starting point for the disappearance of fantasy and phantom to make way for living

human beings. The cinema of the revolution is at the same time one of *destruction and construction*: destruction of the image that neocolonialism has created of itself and of us, and construction of a throbbing, living reality which recaptures truth in any of its expressions.

The restitution of things to their real place and meaning is an eminently subversive fact both in the neocolonial situation and in the consumer societies. In the former, the seeming ambiguity or pseudo-objectivity in newspapers, literature, etc., and the relative freedom of the people's organizations to provide their own information cease to exist, giving way to overt restriction, when it is a question of television and radio, the two most important System-controlled or monopolized communications media. Last year's May events in France are quite explicit on this point.

In a world where the unreal rules, artistic expression is shoved along the channels of fantasy, fiction, language in code, sign language, and messages whispered between the lines. Art is cut off from the concrete facts—which, from the neocolonialist standpoint, are accusatory testimonies—to turn back on itself, strutting about in a world of abstractions and phantoms, where it becomes "timeless" and historyless. Vietnam can be mentioned, but only far from Vietnam; Latin America can be mentioned, but only far enough away from the continent to be effective, in places *where it is depoliticized* and where it does not lead to action.

The cinema known as documentary, with all the vastness that the concept has today, from educational films to the reconstruction of a fact or a historical event, is perhaps the main basis of revolutionary filmmaking. Every image that documents, bears witness to, refutes or deepens the truth of a situation is something more than a film image of purely artistic fact; it becomes something which the System finds indigestible.

Testimony about a national reality is also an inestimable means of dialogue and knowledge on the world plane. No internationalist form of struggle can be carried out successfully if there is not a mutual exchange of experiences among the people, if the people do not succeed in breaking out of the Balkanization on the international, continental, and national planes which imperialism is striving to maintain.

There is no knowledge of a reality as long as that reality is not acted upon, *as long as its transformation is not begun on all fronts of struggle*. The well-known quote from Marx deserves constant repetition: *it is not sufficient to interpret the world; it is now a question of transforming it.*

With such an attitude as his starting point, it remains to the filmmaker to discover his own language, a language which will arise from

a militant and transforming world-view and from the theme being dealt with. Here it may well be pointed out that certain political cadres still maintain old dogmatic positions, which ask the artist or filmmaker to provide an apologetic view of reality, *one which is more in line with wishful thinking than with what actually is*. Such positions, which at bottom mask a lack of confidence in the possibilities of reality itself, have in certain cases led to the use of film language as a mere idealized illustration of a fact, to the desire to remove reality's deep contradictions, its dialectic richness, which is precisely the kind of depth which can give a film beauty and effectiveness. The reality of the revolutionary processes all over the world, in spite of their confused and negative aspects, possesses a dominant line, a synthesis which is so rich and stimulating that it does not need to be schematized with partial or sectarian views.

Pamphlet films, didactic films, report films, essay films, witness-bearing films—any militant form of expression is valid, and it would be absurd to lay down a set of aesthetic work norms. *Be receptive to all that the people have to offer, and offer them the best*; or, as Che put it, *respect the people by giving them quality*. This is a good thing to keep in mind in view of those tendencies which are always latent in the revolutionary artist to lower the level of investigation and the language of a theme, in a kind of *neopopulism*, down to levels which, while they may be those upon which the masses move, do not help them to get rid of the stumbling blocks left by imperialism. The effectiveness of the best films of militant cinema show that social layers considered backward are able to capture the exact meaning of an association of images, an effect of staging, and any linguistic experimentation placed within the context of a given idea. Furthermore, revolutionary cinema is not fundamentally one which illustrates, documents, or passively establishes a situation: *rather, it attempts to intervene in the situation as an element providing thrust or rectification.* To put it another way, it provides *discovery through transformation.*

The differences that exist between one and another liberation process make it impossible to lay down supposedly universal norms. A cinema which in the consumer society does not attain the level of the reality in which it moves can play a stimulating role in an underdeveloped country, just as a revolutionary cinema in the neocolonial situation will not necessarily be revolutionary if it is mechanically taken to the metropolitan country.

Teaching the handling of guns can be revolutionary where there are potentially or explicitly viable leaders ready to throw themselves into the struggle to take power, but ceases to be revolutionary where the masses still lack sufficient awareness of their situation or where they

have already learned to handle guns. Thus, a cinema which insists upon the denunciation of the *effects* of neocolonial policy is caught up in a reformist game if the consciousness of the masses has already assimilated such knowledge; then the revolutionary thing is to examine the *causes*, to investigate the ways of organizing and arming for the change. That is, imperialism can sponsor films that fight illiteracy, and such pictures will only be inscribed within the contemporary need of imperialist policy, but, in contrast, the making of such films in Cuba after the triumph of the Revolution was clearly revolutionary. Although their starting point was just the fact of teaching, reading and writing, they had a goal which was radically different from that of imperialism: the training of people for liberation, not for subjection.

The model of the perfect work of art, the fully rounded film structured according to the metrics imposed by bourgeois culture, its theoreticians and critics, has served to inhibit the filmmaker in the dependent countries, especially when he has attempted to erect similar models in a reality which *offered him neither the culture, the techniques, nor the most primary elements for success.* The culture of the metropolis kept the age-old secrets that had given life to its models; the transposition of the latter to the neocolonial reality was always a mechanism of alienation, *since it was not possible for the artist of the dependent country to absorb, in a few years, the secrets of a culture and society elaborated through the centuries in completely different historical circumstances.* The attempt in the sphere of filmmaking to match the pictures of the ruling countries generally ends in failure, given the existence of two disparate historical realities. And such unsuccessful attempts lead to feelings of frustration and inferiority. Both these feelings arise in the first place from the fear of taking risks along completely new roads *which are almost a total denial of "their cinema."* A fear of recognizing the particularities and limitations of dependency in order to discover the *possibilities inherent in that situation*, by finding ways of overcoming it *which would of necessity be original.*

The existence of a revolutionary cinema is inconceivable without the constant and methodical exercise of practice, search, and experimentation. It even means committing the new filmmaker to take chances on the unknown, to leap into space at times, exposing himself to failure as does the guerrilla who travels along paths that he himself opens up with machete blows. The possibility of discovering and inventing film forms and structures that serve a more profound vision of our reality resides in the ability to place oneself on the outside limits of the familiar, to make one's way amid constant dangers.

Our time is one of hypothesis rather than of thesis, a time of works in progress—unfinished, unordered, violent works made with the camera in one hand and a rock in the other. Such works cannot be assessed according to the traditional theoretical and critical canons. The ideas for *our* film theory and criticism will come to life through inhibition-removing practice and experimentation. "Knowledge begins with practice. After acquiring theoretical knowledge through practice, it is necessary to return to practice."[12] Once he has embarked upon this practice, the revolutionary filmmaker will have to overcome countless obstacles; he will experience the loneliness of those who aspire to the praise of the System's promotion media only to find that those media are closed to him. As Godard would say, he will cease to be a bicycle champion to become an anonymous bicycle rider, Vietnamese-style, submerged in a cruel and prolonged war. But he will also discover that there is a receptive audience that looks upon his work as something of its own existence, and that is ready to defend him in a way that it would never do with any world bicycle champion.

In this long war, with the camera as our rifle, we do in fact move into a guerrilla activity. This is why the work of a *film-guerrilla* group is governed by strict disciplinary norms as to both work methods and security. A revolutionary film group is in the same situation as a guerrilla unit: it cannot grow strong without military structures and command concepts. *The group exists as a network of complementary responsibilities, as the sum and synthesis of abilities, inasmuch as it operates harmonically with a leadership that centralizes planning work and maintains its continuity.* Experience shows that it is not easy to maintain the cohesion of a group when it is bombarded by the System and its chain of accomplices frequently disguised as "progressives," when there are no immediate and spectacular outer incentives and the members must undergo the discomforts and tensions of work that is done underground and distributed clandestinely. Many abandon their responsibilities because they underestimate them or because they measure them with values appropriate to System cinema and not underground cinema. The birth of internal conflicts is a reality present in any group, whether or not it possesses ideological maturity. The lack of awareness of such an inner conflict on the psychological or personality plane, etc., the lack of maturity in dealing with problems of relationships, at times leads to ill feeling and rivalries that in turn cause real clashes going beyond ideological or objective differences. All of this means that a basic condition is an awareness of the problems of interpersonal relationships, leadership and areas of

competence. What is needed is to speak clearly, mark off work areas, assign responsibilities and take on the job as a rigorous militancy.

Guerrilla filmmaking proletarianizes the film worker and breaks down the intellectual aristocracy that the bourgeoisie grants to its followers. In a word, it *democratizes*. The filmmaker's tie with reality makes him more a part of his people. Vanguard layers and even masses participate collectively in the work when they realize that it is the continuity of their daily struggle. *La hora de los hornos* shows how a film can be made in hostile circumstances when it has the support and collaboration of militants and cadres from the people.

The revolutionary filmmaker acts with a radically new vision of the role of the producer, team-work, tools, details, etc. Above all, he supplies himself at all levels in order to produce his films, he equips himself at all levels, he learns how to handle the manifold techniques of his craft. His most valuable possessions are the tools of his trade, which form part and parcel of his need to communicate. The camera is the inexhaustible *expropriator of image-weapons*; the projector, *a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second.*

Each member of the group should be familiar, at least in a general way, with the equipment being used: he must be prepared to replace another in any of the phases of production. The myth of irreplaceable technicians must be exploded.

The whole group must grant great importance to the minor details of the production and the security measures needed to protect it. A lack of foresight which in conventional filmmaking would go unnoticed can render virtually useless weeks or months of work. And a failure in guerrilla cinema, just as in the guerrilla struggle itself, can mean the loss of a work or a complete change of plans. "In a guerrilla struggle the concept of failure is present a thousand times over, and victory a myth that only a revolutionary can dream."[13] Every member of the group must have an ability to take care of details, discipline, speed, and, above all, the willingness to overcome the weaknesses of comfort, old habits, and the whole climate of pseudonormality behind which the warfare of everyday life is hidden. Each film is a different operation, a different job requiring variation in methods in order to confuse or refrain from alerting the enemy, especially since the processing laboratories are still in his hands.

The success of the work depends to a great extent on the group's ability to remain silent, on its permanent wariness, a condition that is difficult to achieve in a situation in which apparently nothing is happening and the filmmaker has been accustomed to telling all and sundry about everything that he's doing because the bourgeoisie has trained him precisely on such a basis of prestige and promotion. The

watchwords "constant vigilance, constant wariness, constant mobility" have profound validity for guerrilla cinema. You have to give the appearance of working on various projects, split up the material, put it together, take it apart, confuse, neutralize, and throw off the track. All of this is necessary as long as the group doesn't have its own processing equipment, no matter how rudimentary, and there remain certain possibilities in the traditional laboratories.

Group-level co-operation between different countries can serve to assure the completion of a film or the execution of certain phases of work that may not be possible in the country of origin. To this should be added the need for a filing center for materials to be used by the different groups and the perspective of coordination, on a continent-wide or even worldwide scale, of the continuity of work in each country: periodic regional or international gatherings to exchange experience, contributions, joint planning of work, etc.

At least in the earliest stages the revolutionary filmmaker and the work groups will be the sole producers of their films. They must bear the responsibility of finding ways to facilitate the continuity of work. Guerrilla cinema still doesn't have enough experience to set down standards in this area; what experience there is has shown, above all, the *ability to make use of the concrete situation of each country.* But, regardless of what these situations may be, the preparation of a film cannot be undertaken without a parallel study of its future audience and, consequently, a plan to recover the financial investment. Here, once again, the need arises for closer ties between political and artistic vanguards, since this also serves for the joint study of forms of production, exhibition, and continuity.

A guerrilla film can be aimed only at the distribution mechanisms provided by the revolutionary organizations, including those invented or discovered by the filmmakers themselves. Production, distribution, and economic possibilities for survival must form part of a single strategy. The solution of the problems faced in each of these areas will encourage other people to join in the work of guerrilla filmmaking, which will enlarge its ranks and thus make it less vulnerable.

The distribution of guerrilla films in Latin America is still in swaddling clothes while System reprisals are already a legalized fact. Suffice it to note in Argentina the raids that have occurred during some showings and the recent film suppression law of a clearly fascist character; in Brazil the ever-increasing restrictions placed upon the most militant comrades of *Cinema Novo*; and in Venezuela the banning of *La hora de los hornos*; over almost all the continent censorship prevents any possibility of public distribution.

Without revolutionary films and a public that asks for them, any attempt to open up new ways of distribution would be doomed to failure. But both of these already exist in Latin America. The appearance of these films opened up a road which in some countries, such as Argentina, occurs through showings in apartments and houses to audiences of never more than 25 people; in other countries, such as Chile, films are shown in parishes, universities, or cultural centers (of which there are fewer every day); and, in the case of Uruguay, showings were given in Montevideo's biggest movie theatre to an audience of 2,500 people, who filled the theatre and made every showing an impassioned anti-imperialist event. But the prospects on the continental plane indicate that the possibility for the continuity of a revolutionary cinema rests upon the strengthening of rigorously underground base structures.

Practice implies mistakes and failures.[14] Some comrades will let themselves be carried away by the success and impunity with which they present the first showings and will tend to relax security measures, while others will go in the opposite direction of excessive precautions or fearfulness, to such an extent that distribution remains circumscribed, limited to a few groups of friends. Only concrete experience in each country will demonstrate which are the best methods there, which do not always lend themselves to application in other situations.

In some places it will be possible to build infrastructures connected to political, student, worker, and other organizations, while in others it will be more suitable to sell prints to organizations which will take charge of obtaining the funds necessary to pay for each print (the cost of the print plus a small margin). This method, wherever possible, would appear to be the most viable, because it permits the decentralization of distribution; makes possible a more profound political use of the film; and permits the recovery, through the sale of more prints, of the funds invested in the production. It is true that in many countries the organizations still are not fully aware of the importance of this work, or, if they are, may lack the means to undertake it. In such cases other methods can be used: the delivery of prints to encourage distribution and a box-office cut to the organizers of each showing, etc. The ideal goal to be achieved would be producing and distributing guerrilla films with funds obtained from expropriations from the bourgeoisie—that is, *the bourgeoisie would be financing guerrilla cinema with a bit of the surplus value that it gets from the people*. But, as long as the goal is no more than a middle- or long-range aspiration, the alternatives open to revolutionary cinema to recover production and distribution costs are to some extent similar to those obtained for

conventional cinema: every spectator should pay the same amount as he pays to see System cinema. Financing, subsidizing, equipping, and supporting revolutionary cinema are political responsibilities for organizations and militants. A film can be made, but if its distribution does not allow for the recovery of the costs, it will be difficult or impossible to make a second film.

The 16mm film circuits in Europe (20,000 exhibition centers in Sweden, 30,000 in France, etc.) are not the best example for the neocolonialized countries, but they are nevertheless a complementary source for fund raising, especially in a situation in which such circuits can play an important role in publicizing the struggles in the Third World, increasingly related as they are to those unfolding in the metropolitan countries. A film on the Venezuelan guerrillas will say more to a European public than twenty explanatory pamphlets, and the same is true for us with a film on the May events in France or the Berkeley, U.S.A., student struggle.

A Guerrilla Films International? And why not? Isn't it true that a kind of new International is arising through the Third World struggles; through OSPAAAL and the revolutionary vanguards of the consumer societies?

A guerrilla cinema, at this stage still within the reach of limited layers of the population, is, nevertheless, *the only cinema of the masses possible today*, since it is the only one involved with the interests, aspirations, and prospects of the vast majority of the people. Every important film produced by a revolutionary cinema will be, explicitly, or not, *a national event of the masses*.

This *cinema of the masses*, which is prevented from reaching beyond the sectors representing the masses, provokes with each showing, as in a revolutionary military incursion, a liberated space, *a decolonized territory*. The showing can be turned into a kind of political event, which, according to Fanon, could be "a liturgical act, a privileged occasion for human beings to hear and be heard."

Militant cinema must be able to extract the infinity of new possibilities that open up for it from the conditions of proscription imposed by the System. The attempt to overcome neocolonial oppression calls for the invention of forms of communication; *it opens up the possibility*.

Before and during the making of *La hora de los hornos* we tried out various methods for the distribution of revolutionary cinema—the little that we had made up to then. Each showing for militants, middle-level cadres, activists, workers, and university students became—without our having set ourselves this aim beforehand—a kind of enlarged cell meeting of which the films were a part but not the most

important factor. We thus discovered a new facet of cinema: the *participation* of people who, until then, were considered *spectators*.

At times, security reasons obliged us to try to dissolve the group of participants as soon as the showing was over, and we realized that the distribution of that kind of film had little meaning if it was not complemented by the participation of the comrades, if a debate was not opened on the themes suggested by the films.

We also discovered that every comrade who attended such showings did so with full awareness that he was infringing the System's laws and exposing his personal security to eventual repression. This person was no longer a spectator; on the contrary, from the moment he decided to attend the showing, *from the moment he lined himself up on this side* by taking risks and contributing his living experience to the meeting, he became an actor, a more important protagonist than those who appeared in the films. Such a person was seeking other committed people like himself while he, in turn, became committed to them. *The spectator made way for the actor, who sought himself in others.*

Outside this space which the films momentarily helped to liberate, there was nothing but solitude, noncommunication, distrust, and fear; within the freed space the situation turned everyone into accomplices of the act that was unfolding. The debates arose spontaneously. As we gained in experience, we incorporated into the showing various elements (a *mise en scène*) to reinforce the themes of the films, the climate of the showing, the "disinhibiting" of the participants, and the dialogue: recorded music or poems, sculpture and paintings, posters, a program director who chaired the debate and presented the film and the comrades who were speaking, a glass of wine, a few *mates*,[15] etc. We realized that we had at hand three very valuable factors:

1) *The participant comrade*, the man-actor-accomplice who responded to the summons;
2) *The free space* where that man expressed his concerns and ideas, became politicized, and started to free himself; and
3) *The film*, important only as a detonator or pretext.

We concluded from these data that a film could be much more effective if it were fully aware of these factors and took on the task of subordinating its own form, structure, language, and propositions to that act and to those actors—to put it another way, *if it sought its own liberation in its subordination to and insertion in others, the principal protagonists of life*. With the correct utilization of the *time* that that group of actor-personages offered us with their diverse histories, the

use of the *space* offered by certain comrades, and of the *films* themselves, *it was necessary to try to transform time, energy, and work into freedom-giving energy*. In this way the idea began to grow of structuring what we decided to call the *film act*, the *film action*, one of the forms which we believe assumes great importance in affirming the line of a *third cinema*. A cinema whose first experiment is to be found, perhaps on a rather shaky level in the second and third parts of *La hora de los hornos* (*"Acto para la liberacion"*; above all, starting with *"La resistencia"* and *"Violencia y liberacion"*).

> Comrades [we said at the start of "Acto para la liberacion"], this is not just a film showing, nor is it a show; rather, it is, above all A MEETING—an act of anti-imperialist unity; this is a place only for those who feel identified with this struggle, because here there is no room for spectators or for accomplices of the enemy; here there is room only for the authors and protagonists of the process which the film attempts to bear witness to and to deepen. The film is the pretext for dialogue, for the seeking and finding of wills. It is a report that we place before you for your consideration, to be debated after the showing.
>
> The conclusions [we said at another point in the second part] at which you may arrive as the real authors and protagonists of this history are important. The experiences and conclusions that we have assembled have a relative worth; they are of use to the extent that they are useful to you, who are the present and future of liberation. But most important of all is the action that may arise from these conclusions, the unity on the basis of the facts. This is why the film stops here; it opens out to you so that you can continue it.

The film act means an open-ended film; it is essentially a way of learning.

> The first step in the process of knowledge is the first contact with the things of the outside world, the stage of sensations [*in a film, the living fresco of image and sound*]. The second step is the synthesizing of the data provided by the sensations; their ordering and elaboration; the stage of concepts, judgements, opinions, and deductions [*in the film, the announcer, the reportings, the didactics, or the narrator who leads the projection act*]. And then comes the third stage, that of knowledge. The active role of knowledge is expressed not only in the active leap from sensory to rational knowledge, but, and what is even more important, in the leap from rational knowledge to revolutionary practice . . . The practice of the transformation of the world . . . This, in

general terms, is the dialectical materialist theory of the unity of knowledge and action[16] [*in the projection of the film act, the participation of the comrades, the action proposals that arise, and the actions themselves that will take place later*].

Moreover, each projection of a film act presupposes a *different setting*, since the space where it takes place, the materials that go to make it up (actors-participants), and the historic time in which it takes place are never the same. This means that the result of each projection act will depend on those who organize it, on those who participate in it, and on the time and place; the possibility of introducing variations, additions, and changes is unlimited. The screening of a film act will always express in one way or another the historical situation in which it takes place; its perspectives are not exhausted in the struggle for power but will instead continue after the taking of power to strengthen the revolution.

The man of the *third cinema*, be it *guerrilla cinema* or a *film act*, with the infinite categories that they contain (film letter, film poem, film essay, film pamphlet, film report, etc.), above all counters the film industry of a cinema of characters with one of themes, that of individuals with that of masses, that of the author with that of the operative group, one of neocolonial misinformation with one of information, one of escape with one that recaptures the truth, that of passivity with that of aggressions. To an institutionalized cinema, it counterposes a guerrilla cinema; to movies as shows, it opposes a film act or action; to a cinema of destruction, one that is both destructive and constructive; to a cinema made for the old kind of human being, for *them*, it opposes a *cinema fit for a new kind of human being, for what each one of us has the possibility of becoming*.

The decolonization of the filmmaker and of films will be simultaneous acts to the extent that each contributes to collective decolonization. The battle begins without, against the enemy who attacks us, but also within, *against the ideas and models of the enemy to be found inside each one of us*. Destruction and construction. Decolonizing action rescues with its practice the purest and most vital impulses. It opposes to the colonialization of minds the revolution of consciousness. The world is scrutinized, unravelled, rediscovered. People are witness to a constant astonishment, a kind of second birth. They recover their early simplicity, their capacity for adventure; their lethargic capacity for indignation comes to life.

Freeing a forbidden truth means setting free the possibility of indignation and subversion. Our truth, that of the new man who builds himself by getting rid of all the defects that still weigh him down, is a bomb of inexhaustible power and, at the same time, *the only real possibility of life*. Within this attempt, the revolutionary filmmaker ventures with *his subversive observation, sensibility, imagination, and realization*. The great themes—the history of the country, love and unlove between combatants, the efforts of a people who are awakening—all this is reborn before the lens of the decolonized camera. The filmmaker feels for the first time. He discovers that, within the System, nothing fits, while outside of and against the System, everything fits, because everything remains to be done. What appeared yesterday as a preposterous adventure, as we said at the beginning, is posed today as *an inescapable need and possibility*.

Thus far, we have offered ideas and working propositions, which are the sketch of a hypothesis arising from our personal experience and which will have achieved something positive even if they do no more than serve to open a heated dialogue on the new revolutionary film prospects. The vacuums existing in the artistic and scientific fronts of the revolution are sufficiently well known so that the adversary will not try to appropriate them, while we are still unable to do so.

Why films and not some other form of artistic communication? If we choose films as the center of our propositions and debate, it is because that is our work front and because the birth of a *third cinema* means, at least for us, *the most important revolutionary artistic event of our times*.

Translation from *Cineaste* revised by Julianne Burton and Editor

Notes

1. *The Hour of the Furnaces—Neocolonialism and Violence*.
2. Juan José Hernandez Arregui, *Imperialism and Culture*.
3. Rene Zavaleta Mercado, *Bolivia: Growth of the National Concept*.
4. *The Hour of the Furnaces*.
5. Ibid.
6. Observe the new custom of some groups of the upper bourgeoisie from Rome and Paris who spend their weekends travelling to Saigon to get a close-up view of the Vietcong offensive.
7. Irwin Silber, "U.S.A.: The Alienation of Culture," *Tricontinental* 10.
8. The organization Vanguard Artists of Argentina.
9. *The Hour of the Furnaces*.
10. Mao Tse-tung, *On Practice*.
11. Rodolfo Puigross, *The Proletariat and National Revolution*.
12. Mao Tse-tung, op. cit.
13. Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*.

14. The raiding of a Buenos Aires union and the arrest of dozens of persons resulting from a bad choice of projection site and the large number of people invited.
15. A traditional Argentine herb tea, *hierba mate*.
16. Mao Tse-tung, op. cit.

An Esthetic of Hunger

Glauber Rocha

Dispensing with the informative introduction so characteristic of discussions about Latin America, I prefer to examine the relationship between our culture and "civilized" culture in broader terms than those of the European observer. Thus, while Latin America laments its general misery, the foreign onlooker cultivates the taste of that misery, not as a tragic symptom, but merely as an esthetic object within his field of interest. The Latin American neither communicates his real misery to the "civilized" European, nor does the European truly comprehend the misery of the Latin American.

This is the fundamental situation of the arts in Brazil today: many distortions, especially the formal exoticism that vulgarizes social problems, have provoked a series of misunderstandings that involve not only art but also politics. For the European observer the process of artistic creation in the underdeveloped world is of interest only insofar as it satisfies a nostalgia for primitivism. This primitivism is generally presented as a hybrid form, disguised under the belated heritage of the "civilized world," a heritage poorly understood since it is imposed by colonial conditioning. Latin America remains, undeniably, a colony, and what distinguishes yesterday's colonialism from today's colonialism is merely the more polished form of the colonizer and the more subtle forms of those who are preparing future domination. The international problem of Latin America is still a case of merely exchanging

Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, eds., *Brazilian Cinema*. NJ: Associated University Presses, 1982, pp. 69–71. By permission of the publisher.

colonizers. Our possible liberation will probably come, therefore, in the form of a new dependency.

This economic and political conditioning has led us to philosophical weakness and impotence that engenders sterility when conscious and hysteria when unconscious. It is for this reason that the hunger of Latin America is not simply an alarming symptom: it is the essence of our society. There resides the tragic originality of Cinema Novo in relation to world cinema. Our originality is our hunger and our greatest misery is that this hunger is felt but not intellectually understood.

We understand the hunger that the European and the majority of Brazilians have not understood. For the European it is a strange tropical surrealism. For the Brazilian it is a national shame. He does not eat, but he is ashamed to say so; and yet, he does not know where this hunger comes from. We know—since we made these sad, ugly films, these screaming, desperate films where reason does not always prevail —that this hunger will not be cured by moderate governmental reforms and that the cloak of technicolor cannot hide, but only aggravates, its tumors. Therefore, only a culture of hunger, weakening its own structures, can surpass itself qualitatively; the most noble cultural manifestation of hunger is violence.

Cinema Novo shows that the normal behavior of the starving is violence; and the violence of the starving is not primitive. Is Fabiano [in *Barren Lives*] primitive? Is Antão [in *Ganga Zumba*] primitive? Is Corisco [in *Black God, White Devil*] primitive? Is the woman in *Porto das Caixas* primitive?

From Cinema Novo it should be learned that an esthetic of violence, before being primitive, is revolutionary. It is the initial moment when the colonizer becomes aware of the colonized. Only when confronted with violence does the colonizer understand, through horror, the strength of the culture he exploits. As long as they do not take up arms, the colonized remain slaves; a first policeman had to die for the French to become aware of the Algerians.

From a moral position this violence is not filled with hatred just as it is not linked to the old colonizing humanism. The love that this violence encompasses is as brutal as the violence itself because it is not a love of complacency or contemplation but rather of action and transformation.

The time has long passed since Cinema Novo had to justify its existence. Cinema Novo is an ongoing process of exploration that is making our thinking clearer, freeing us from the debilitating delirium of hunger. Cinema Novo cannot develop effectively while it remains marginal to the economic and cultural process of the Latin American continent. Cinema Novo is a phenomenon of new peoples everywhere

and not a privilege of Brazil. Wherever one finds filmmakers prepared to film the truth and oppose the hypocrisy and repression of intellectual censorship there is the living spirit of Cinema Novo; wherever filmmakers, of whatever age or background, place their cameras and their profession in the service of the great causes of our time there is the spirit of Cinema Novo. This is the definition of the movement and through this definition Cinema Novo sets itself apart from the commercial industry because the commitment of Industrial Cinema is to untruth and exploitation. The economic and industrial integration of Cinema Novo depends on the freedom of Latin America. Cinema Novo devotes itself entirely to this freedom, in its own name, and in the name of all its participants, from the most ignorant to the most talented, from the weakest to the strongest. It is this ethical question that will be reflected in our work, in the way we film a person or a house, in the details that we choose, in the moral that we choose to teach. Cinema Novo is not one film but an evolving complex of films that will ultimately make the public aware of its own misery.

New York, Milan, Rio de Janeiro
January, 1965

Translated by Randal Johnson and Burnes Hollyman

Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema

Jorge Sanjinés

Revolutionary cinema must seek beauty not as an end but as a means. This proposition implies a dialectical interrelation between beauty and cinema's objectives, which must be correctly aligned in order to produce an effective work. If that interrelation is missing, we end up with a pamphlet, for example, which may well be perfect in its proclamation but which is schematic and crude in its form. The lack of a coherent creative form reduces its effectiveness, destroys the ideological dynamic of the content and merely locates for us what is on the surface, the superficialities, without giving us any of the essence, the humanity, the love: categories that can only issue from a sensitive and responsive means of expression, capable of revealing the truth.

Collective Work

Revolutionary cinema is in the process of formation. Certain conceptions about art that bourgeois ideology has deeply instilled in those artists who have been formed within the parameters of western culture are not so easily or quickly changed. Nevertheless, we think it is a process that will succeed in purging itself through contact with the people, by integrating them into the creative process, by elucidating the aims of popular art, and by leaving off with individualistic positions. Today there are many group efforts and collective films, and,

Jorge Sanjinés and the Ukamau Group, *Theory & Practice of a Cinema with the People*. CT: Curbstone Press, 1989, pp. 38–53. First published in *teoría y práctica de un cine junto al pueblo*. Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1979. By permission of the publisher.

what is very important, there is the participation of the people who act, who come forward, who create directly, determining the form of the film in a process where the immutable script is disappearing or where the dialogue, during the act of filming, spontaneously issues from the people themselves and from their prodigious capacity. Life begins to be expressed in all its power and truth.

As we already maintained in an article on this question, revolutionary cinema cannot be anything but collective in its most complete phase, since the revolution is collective. Popular cinema, in which the fundamental protaganist will be the people, will develop individual histories when these have meaning for the collective, when these serve the people's understanding, rather than that of one individual, and when they are integrated into the history of the collective as a whole. The individual hero must give way to the popular hero—numerous, quantitative—and, in the process of elaboration, this popular hero will not only be the internal motive of the film but its qualitative driving force: participant and creator.

Language

A film about the people made by a screenwriter isn't the same as a film made by the people *through* a screenwriter, inasmuch as the interpreter and translator of that people becomes their expressive vehicle. With a change in the relations of creation comes a change in the content and, in parallel, a change in the form.

In revolutionary cinema, the final product will always be the result of individual abilities organized toward one same end, where the spirit and life-breath of a whole people, and not just the problems of one man alone, is captured and transmitted. The problems of the individual, which assume overblown proportions in bourgeois society, are resolved within revolutionary society through the process of confronting the problems of society as a whole, and are reduced to a normal level because their solutions are encountered in the course of being integrated into revolutionary society: where the aloneness that causes all psychological neuroses disappears forever.

The loving or apathetic treatment by a filmmaker of an object or of men becomes evident in his work, mocking his sense of being in control. What the filmmaker thinks and feels is manifested in the expressive means he chooses to use. His selection of language forms reveals his attitude and, therefore, a film tells us not only something about the subject it treats but also something about the filmmaker.

When we shot *Blood of the Condor* with the peasants in the remote community of Kaata, our purpose deep down—though we desired to

contribute politically with our work by denouncing the *gringos* and showing a social picture of Bolivian reality—was to achieve recognition for our abilities. There's no denying it, just as we can't deny that during the filming our relationship with the peasant actors was still a vertical one. We were employing a formal treatment that led us to select scenes according to our personal likes, without taking into account their communicability or their cultural meaning. Scripts had to be memorized and repeated exactly. Though the soundtrack played an important role in the resolution of certain sequences, we didn't give importance to the needs of the viewer, for whom we said we were making that film, who required clear, visual images and who later complained when the film was shown.

Thanks to the confrontation of our films with the people, thanks to their criticisms, suggestions, advice, protests and confusions due to our misunderstanding of the ideological relationship between form and content, we were slowly distilling a language and incorporating the creativity of the people themselves, whose notable expressive and interpretative abilities demonstrate a sensibility that is pure, free of stereotypes and alienations.

While filming *The Courage of the People*, many scenes were shot in the same place as the events discussed with the actual protagonists of those historical accounts we were reconstructing, with those who at bottom had more of a claim on deciding how things ought to be reconstructed than we did. On the other hand, they were interpreting things with a force and conviction that was unattainable by a professional actor. These *compañeros* wanted not only to transmit their experiences with the intensity they possessed, but they knew what were the most important political objectives of the film and, therefore, their participation brought to it a fresh militancy. They possessed a clear consciousness of how the film was to serve, spreading its denunciation of the true facts throughout the country, and they were prepared to make use of it as they would a weapon. We, the components with the film equipment, became the instruments of the people who were expressing themselves and fighting through our medium!

The dialogue was drawn from their precise memory of the events, or else became the expression of their thoughts about the events, as in *The Principal Enemy*. The peasants used the scenes to liberate their repressed voice, and they told the judge or boss in the film what they really wanted to say about the truth. Cinematic reality and actual reality are interwoven and merge as one. What is artificial has to do with mere extraneous factors, but through the revealing, creative actions of the people the cinematic reenactment meshes with actual reality.

When we decided to use sequence shots in our latest films, we were spurred on by the surging demands of the content. We had to use shots that integrated the participation of the viewer. Jumping right away to close-ups of the assassin—in *The Principal Enemy*—in the crowded plaza where the popular tribunal was held didn't serve our purposes, because the surprise that is always produced by directly cutting to a close-up was opposed to what we were trying to develop in the sequence shots, which was to engage the participation of the viewer by means of the internal power of the people's collective participation. The simple movement of the camera interpreted differing points of view, the dramatic demands of the viewer that would enable him to quit being a viewer so as to become an actual participant. Occasionally the sequence shots would lead us into a close-up, sparing what distance is in fact possible in the approach, or else would open up the field between shoulders and heads in order to bring us physically closer to see and listen. To cut to a big close-up is to brutally impose the viewpoint of the filmmaker, his own interpretation of reality, on the viewer. To move from a general shot with other people in it to a closeup has a different meaning, embodies a different attitude, which is more coherent with what is taking place, with the actual content. While filming *The Principal Enemy*, we often felt compelled to break with this kind of treatment because of purely technical limitations; failures in the sound equipment through overuse, noise from the "blimp," or the camera's noise filter hampered our shooting in sequences, and we had to break the filming up into parts. Also, the high degree of improvisation that goes along with popular participation made it difficult to conceptualize successive cuts with any degree of continuity. Somehow, though, that experience was for us totally justified, because the whole process of making the film became, simultaneously, a rich process of discovering new elements (at least they were new to us). It was a totally different school of cinema than the one in which we had learned our ABCs, and we were often amazed by what was taking place before our very eyes!

Put another way, there is the subjective treatment of things that goes hand-in-hand with the needs and attitudes of a certain individualist cinema as opposed to an objective, nonpsychological, sensoral treatment that facilitates the participation and needs of a popular cinema.

The presence of a collective protagonist, rather than an individual protagonist, informs the objective treatment and distance needed to engage the viewer in reflection. Not only did the search for an ideological coherence help convince us of the need to do away with the individual protagonist—the hero and focus of every story in our

culture—but also our observation of the primordial and essential characteristics of indigenous American culture. Indians, through their social traditions, tend to conceive of themselves first as integral members of the group, and then as isolated individuals. Their way of living is not individualistic. They understand reality as the complex integration of everything and everyone, and they act on the basis of this understanding very naturally, since it is an inseparable part of their world view. At first it is bewildering to understand what it means to think of oneself in this way, because it is a whole other way of thinking and involves a dialectic opposite to that of individualism. The individualist exists alone and above everything and everyone; the Indian, on the other hand, exists solely in interaction with everything and everyone. When that equilibrium is upset, the Indian becomes disoriented and nothing makes any sense. The great Peruvian political thinker, Mariátegui, referring to concepts of freedom, said that the Indian is never less free than when he is alone. I remember an interview we recently filmed where a peasant was demanding the presence of his *compañeros* from the community so that he could feel confident and comfortable about what he was saying. Exactly the reverse would happen with an ordinary citizen, who would want to be alone in order to feel secure!

In revolutionary art we always encounter the stylistic mark of a people and the life-breath of a popular culture that embraces a whole community of men and women, with their particular way of thinking and conceiving reality, and their love of life. Its aim is to arrive at the truth *through* beauty, and this is what differentiates it from bourgeois art, where beauty is pursued even at the cost of lying. By observing and incorporating popular culture into our work, we will be able to fully develop the language of a liberating art!

Distribution of Revolutionary Cinema

The distribution of revolutionary films constitutes a major problem and raises questions that require urgent solving.

Militant anti-imperialist films are the object of special persecution and censure in the majority of countries where their purpose is most likely to be fulfilled. This situation has greatly discouraged whomever doesn't view the work of a revolutionary filmmaker as being done simply when the work of filming and editing is done, that the problems of distribution are problems of realization that cannot be dismissed because of the immediate impossibility of resolving them; similarly a film must not cease to exist because it may be impossible to distribute it at that precise political moment. From the moment the

problems of one dominated country become the problems of other dominated countries, that pretext is invalidated.

We must remember that the political dynamic of our countries, at least the majority of them, is constantly changing, and that the ebb and flow of the internal contradictions of each country creates favorable periods when these films can be widely distributed. It is a matter then of struggle! And in the struggle you must know when and where to shoot, and when to keep your head down in the trenches.

To censor ourselves, to disguise our film's content, to symbolize them, is to fall into opportunism and into operations dangerously useful to the enemy, who well knows how to manipulate materials that do not confront it head-on to its advantage.

A true revolutionary film has the right to exist, and the necessity of distributing it is implicit in its essence. Revolutionaries today can fight the same enemies wherever they are. Naturally, they could wage this struggle under better conditions through the enemy's own controlled means of communication, but when this isn't possible they must take up another position on the battlefield, which is the world exploited by imperialism. What cannot be tolerated is remaining in Paris, comfortably vegetating. Revolutionaries don't have vacations nor does the revolution take a break.

Nowadays revolutionary films can be seen in many European countries generally through some television networks or in specialized movie theaters. This distribution, as well as screenings at frequent film festivals, reaches viewers who can be classified *grosso modo* into two groups: the passive viewer and consumer of culture or entertainment who is in the majority, and that other viewer whose attitude towards this cinema is consistent with his advanced thinking and who extracts information to be used in the formation of new ideas and concepts. We believe this last type of viewer is each day becoming more numerous in Europe, and, therefore, the distribution of our films in Europe is justified (one could also justify this distribution on the basis of the economic support it provided, which meant selling copies to television networks and movie theaters, even though filmmakers in nearly every instance received next to nothing from these dealings).

In the United States, in the very bowels of the imperialist enemy, revolutionary cinema is being distributed. Many films are shown by universities and progressive organizations, shedding light on the problems of our peoples and showing the real workings of the system, the atrocities it commits against the world it subjugates. This has resulted in a deepening of solidarity with our peoples and a strengthening of the anti-imperialist struggle raised by progressive North American sectors who are well-acquainted with the exploitation, the dehumani-

zation, the racism in the U.S., all of which are also caused by capitalist ideology.

Nevertheless, we Latin American filmmakers are mainly interested in distributing our cinema in our countries, whether they be our own or our brother countries. We have said that this task is very difficult and also dangerous: Carlos Alvarez, the screenwriter of *What is Democracy?*, was jailed along with his *compañera* by the Colombian military, accused of subversion for his cinematic work! Walter Achugar was detained and tortured in Uruguay; Félix Gómez, of the Ukamau Group in Bolivia, spent close to 18 months in a concentration camp for having in his possession a case containing props for our film *The Courage of the People*. Antonio Eguino, director of photography for the same film, was arrested and detained for 15 days, during protests by university students and broad progressive sectors, for the offense of having in his possession a copy of *The Courage of the People*. Filmmakers and actors on the left have been imprisoned by Pinochet, and today we still know nothing of their fate! A good part of the most committed Latin American filmmakers have been prohibited from returning to their countries. But, despite the persecution and repression, Latin American cinema continues to be produced and, in some countries, there exists a true effervescence that will quickly bear fruit in new values and new experiences. The circulation of Latin American films, though restricted, has never been stopped, and it is even increasing where conditions are favorable. In Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Peru, Ecuador, Mexico, film festivals have been organized and Latin American cinema is widely distributed. In Venezuela and Panama they even held festivals for Cuban cinema. What is mainly lacking in these countries where distribution is possible is a more systematic and organized effort to consistently bring this cinema to the people. This is why the present Ecuadorian experience, which we will talk about in more detail, is so important.

In Bolivia, before the ominous outbreak of fascism, the films of the Ukamau Group were widely distributed. *Blood of the Condor* was seen by close to 250,000 people! We weren't satisfied with its distribution through the conventional commercial channels, so the film was brought to the countryside using a portable generator and equipment in order to screen it in villages that were without electricity. The result was uplifting: the film contributed to the ousting of the Peace Corps of *yanqui* imperialism, because it caused a stir and led to the formation of university and official commissions that studied its suspect activities and thus called for its expulsion.

In Chile, before and during the government of the Popular Unity, our films were being distributed through commercial channels, as well as being shown in factories and in the countryside. In Argentina, there have been interesting distributing experiences by organizations like the Cinema Liberation Group which distributed its materials widely among the workers.

Right now, in the present political moment, we think Ecuador is where one of the most interesting political experiences of anti-imperialist cinema is taking place. At the moment, films such as *What is Democracy?, Cerro Pelado, The Hour of the Furnaces, Compañero President, NOW, Revolution, That's the Way It Is, Blood of the Condor, The Courage of the People*, and *The Principal Enemy*, have been widely distributed in the universities and worker's centers. For reasons of cultural identity and the fact that the people of Ecuador face the same problems as the rest of Latin Americans, some of these films have reached a surprising number of viewers: in two and a half months *The Courage of the People* was seen and discussed by nearly 40,000 workers in the area of Quito alone! Based on statistics we collected and taking into account the work of distributing our films among the peasants in the countryside, we calculate that in just one year approximately 340,000 workers, peasants and students came to see the films of our group. We feel very pleased and proud that our films have reached so many people in a country as small as Ecuador. This fact is in large part due to the efforts of the Cinema Department of the Central University, to the enthusiasm of the *compañeros* of the Cinema Club of the National Polytechnic School. Both institutions have concentrated their work in the mass-based organizations and in the trade unions, but they have also brought films into the interior of the country and to the countryside. Other universities, trade unions and peasant organizations, as well as priests committed to truly helping the poor, are also openly distributing this material with an intensity that is remarkable. In the case of the films by the Ukamau Group, it is possible that factors of cultural identity, like the fact that Quechua is spoken in parts of the films, greatly influence their being accepted and widely distributed. However, we think this is due chiefly to an identification with the socio-political dilemma that these films confront. The discussions and interviews we had with viewers were characteristic: they either insisted on their identity with the problems of Bolivia and Ecuador, or they simply didn't give any importance to the question of nationality in the film and discussed it as something in its own right.

We are going to conclude this article by citing the opinions of workers and peasants who are actually seeing and demanding to see these films, but first we want to call attention to the Ecuadorian experience and call for cinema to be immediately brought to the people in

those countries where it's possible to do so. The attitude and practices of movie theaters and institutions that show these materials must change, in order to transform the static movie houses devoted to sterile pleasure, contrary to the meaning of this cinema, by using portable equipment that can be set up in factories and in communities, initiating a dialogue with the people that benefits both the viewers and those showing the film, because that relationship will change during the process of interaction itself, and also because a give-and-take exchange of information will be facilitated.

Translated by Richard Schaaf

For an Imperfect Cinema

Julio García Espinosa

Nowadays perfect cinema—technically and artistically masterful—is almost always reactionary cinema. The major temptation facing Cuban cinema at this time—when it is achieving its objective of becoming a cinema of quality, one which is culturally meaningful within the revolutionary process—is precisely that of transforming itself into a perfect cinema.

The "boom" of Latin American cinema—with Brazil and Cuba in the forefront, according to the applause and approval of the European intelligentsia—is similar, in the present moment, to the one of which the Latin American novel had previously been the exclusive benefactor. Why do they applaud us? There is no doubt that a certain standard of quality has been reached. Doubtless, there is a certain political opportunism, a certain mutual instrumentality. But without doubt there is also something more. Why should we worry about their accolades? Isn't the goal of public recognition a part of the rules of the artistic game? When it comes to artistic culture, isn't European recognition equivalent to worldwide recognition? Doesn't it serve art and our peoples as well when works produced by underdeveloped nations obtain such recognition?

Although it may seem curious, it is necessary to clarify the fact that this disquiet is not solely motivated by ethical concerns. As a matter of fact, the motivation is for the most part aesthetic, if indeed it is possible to draw such an arbitrary dividing link between the two

Michael Chanan, ed., *Twenty-Five Years of New Latin American Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1983, pp. 28–33. By permission of the editor.

Cinema and Underdevelopment

Fernando Birri

The following answers should all be understood and very concretely so, as concerned with a sub-cinematography, that of Argentina and the region of underdeveloped Latin America of which it is a part. Furthermore, they reflect the point of view of a film director from a capitalist and neocolonialist country, the opposite pole from the situation in Cuba.

What Kind of Cinema Does Argentina Need? What Kind of Cinema Do the Underdeveloped Peoples of Latin America Need?

A cinema which develops them.

A cinema which brings them consciousness, which awakens consciousness; which clarifies matters; which strengthens the revolutionary consciousness of those among them who already possess this; which fires them; which disturbs, worries, shocks and weakens those who have a "bad conscience," a reactionary consciousness; which defines profiles of national, Latin American identity; which is authentic; which is anti-oligarchic and anti-bourgeois at the national level, and anti-colonial and anti-imperialist at the international level; which is pro-people, and anti-anti-people; which helps the passage from underdevelopment to development, from sub-stomach to stomach, from sub-

Michael Chanan, ed., *Twenty-Five Years of New Latin American Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1983, pp. 9–12. By permission of the editor.

culture to culture, from sub-happiness to happiness, from sub-life to life.

Our purpose is to create a new person, a new society, a new history and therefore a new art and a new cinema. Urgently.

And with the raw material of a reality which is little and badly understood: that of the underdeveloped countries of Latin America (or, if you prefer the euphemism favored by the Organization of American States, the developing countries of Latin America). Understanding—or, rather, misunderstanding—of these countries has always come about by applying analytical schemes imposed by foreign colonialists or their local henchmen (whose particular mentality has deformed such ideas even further).

What Kind of Cinema Does Argentina Have at the Moment?

One with a solid industrial tradition, whose Golden Age was in the 30s and 40s (Lucas Demare's *La Guerra Gaucha*, for example). It conquered the markets of Latin America, then prostituted itself under Peronism, before recovering once again, culturally speaking, under the guidance of Torre Nilsson, during the so-called "revolution of liberation" (actually a military dictatorship). It then evolved into an independent movement in which the left began to play a role. This development coincided with Frondizi's rise to power in 1961–2, when more than fifteen new feature directors and many more directors of shorts took their places in the national cinema. After the 1962 *frondizazo*, however, and during the provisional presidency of Guido, such independent efforts turned in on themselves, and "dependent" production became dominant once again. Only one independent film was made, Manuel Antín's *Los venerables todos*, the very epitome of alienation.

The problem is that cinema is a cultural product, a product of the superstructure. So it is subject to all the superstructure's distortions. In the case of cinema these are exacerbated further than in the other arts due to its nature as an industrial art. In countries like ours, which are in the throes of incipient industrialization, political shocks make this condition chronic.

Furthermore, cinema is a language. A language, like others, which enables communication and expression at both the mass and personal levels. Here as well things get out of balance as bourgeois attitudes—which are either reactionary or, at best, liberal and always sub-cultural—typically give most attention to the "cinema of expression." This cinema (typified by Torre Nilsson) is set in opposition to "commer-

cial" cinema (such as that of Amadori, Demare or Tynaire). At its height, in 1955, this opposition became a veritable battle within the structures of bourgeois culture. "Expression" won—and now where are we? What and who is to benefit from such "expression" (à la Torre Nilsson, Kohon, Kuhn, Antín)? The navel of Buddha? "Commercial" cinema has won its audience by any method going; or more precisely, the worst methods going. We cannot support it. The "cinema of expression" uses the best methods, and scorns the mass audience. We cannot support it either. Once again, the contradiction between art and industry is resolved very badly, except for the "select" minority which makes up the audience of the "cinema of expression," for whom such a solution is perfectly satisfactory.

We have already pointed out that cinema manifests the cultural and economic values of society's superstructure. Neither its generic lack of culture nor its economic precariousness precludes it from these categories. Argentina, Latin America, 1963: a bourgeois superstructure, semi-colonial and underdeveloped. Its cinema, therefore, expresses these conditions, consciously or unconsciously if it favors them, always consciously if it is against.

This is the fact of the matter, and there is no way round it, like it or not, and whether or not we care to recognize it. It is true wherever you look, from Lucas Demare and Torre Nilsson, as representatives of those in favor, to the short filmmakers Oliva and Fisherman, new directors who have declared themselves against.

For the first group, those who are consciously or unconsciously in favor of the existing order of things, no problem arises. The superstructure keeps them, pampers them, and gives them official credits, prizes, national exhibition, "Argentinian Film Weeks" abroad, international festivals, travel as representatives of national culture, and press coverage of their triumphs and supposed triumphs (in its local newspapers an anxious but finally negative European criticism transforms a failure into "a polemical and very worthy film," as happened with Antín's *Los venerables todos* in Cannes in 1963, or Nilsson's *Homenaje a la hora de la siesta* in Venice in 1962). The superstructure serves them, when all is said and done, as a pedestal. A fragile enough pedestal for eternal glory, you may admonish us. Certainly, but meanwhile, down here, in the here-and-now, it keeps them able to produce films.

The only problems these directors have ever had to face have come from personal rivalry or, at worst, from the irrational infraction of some ultramontane moral taboo (as in the case of Beatriz Guido, for example) to do with sex or violence, never from any "political" offense. Such sins were rapidly forgiven, like those of prodigal children,

when from 1957 onwards new and independent currents began to appear in our national cinema, pursuing not expression but ideas. Among those representing these currents were Murúa, Feldman, Martínez Suárez, Alventosa, the Institute of Cinematography at the National University of the Litoral, sectors of the Association of Short Film Directors, Cinema Workshops, the Association of Experimental Cinema, the Nucleus Cinema Club, *Cinecritica* magazine, the writer of this article.

Given This Situation, How and Why Was the Institute of Cinematography at the National University of the Litoral Formed?

Today the Institute of Cinematography is a material fact. But in 1956 it was only an idea.

This idea was born at a time when Argentinian cinematography was disintegrating, both culturally and industrially. It affirmed a goal and a method. The goal was realism. The method was training based in theory and practice.

To locate this goal historically, remember that the dominant characteristic of Argentinian cinema at that time was precisely its "unrealism." This was true of both its extremes. The opportunism of the numerous box-office hits (such as those of the main studio Argentina Sono Films, or the Demare-Pondal Ríos *Despues del silencio*, or *chanchada* comedies) and the evasiveness of the few "intellectualized" films (Torre Nilsson's *La casa del angel*, Ayala's *El jefe*) made the cinematographic images of the country they presented to audiences equally unreal and alien. Popular and art cinema were falsely made out to be irreconcilable opposites, when what were actually being discussed were "commercial" and "elitist" cinema.

Our objective was a realism which would transcend this tendentious duality. In it we were joined by other non-cinematic groups all of whom shared the aspiration towards an art which would be simultaneously popular and of high quality.

To locate our method historically, remember that the national cinema industry had always been founded on the purest empiricism, usually manifest in a frustrating degree of improvisation.

Remember also that at this time there was not even a plan for a National Film School, despite the inclusion of the idea in the 1957 Decree Law 62 (it was not carried through). The teaching facilities which did exist made no impact on the industry itself, much less on public opinion.

We should be wary of schematic generalization, for there were exceptions which proved the rule and we must give credit to the significant positive moments on the curve of the old national cinema (such as Mario Soffici's *Prisioneros de la tierra*, or Hugo del Carril's *Las aguas bajan turbias*). But any objective analysis must finally lead to the general negative conclusion recorded here.

The goal and method I have described, those of a realist cinematography and a theoretico-practical training, came together polemically in the Documentary School at Santa Fe. They did so as a simultaneously critical and constructive contribution—or constructively critical, if you prefer—to national cinema, and as a response to a need for national transformation which we believe exists throughout Latin America, given the continent's common condition of underdevelopment.

It was these artistic principles which inspired our work from *Tire Dié*, the Institute's first film of social inquiry, to *Los inundados*, our first fictional feature, which synthesized our experience. On the way we also made *Los 40 cuartos*, a documentary which was banned and whose prints and negative were confiscated under the 1959 Decree 4965, which was passed by provisional President Guido to suppress "insurrectionary activities." This banning and confiscation remain in force to the present day. *Los inundados* synthesizes the experience of the Institute, enlarging its scope and giving it its fullest expression both professionally and as entertainment, in the best senses of these terms. For these reasons, and because it answers to the founding intentions of the Santa Fe Documentary School, both experimental and academic, this film bears the responsibility of being our movement's manifesto, carried forth under the banner of a national cinematography which is "realist, critical and popular."

What Are the Future Perspectives for Latin American Cinema?

Seen from the general perspective of developments in cinema, and given that this is an Argentinian film, a Latin American film, the most important thing right now if we are to ensure such a future is that the film should be seen. In other words, the most important thing is exhibition and distribution.

The starting point for this statement is the fact that our films are not seen by the public, or are only seen with extreme difficulty. This happens—and we denounce the fact—not because of the films themselves or our public, but because the films are systematically boycotted by both national and international distributors and exhibitors, who are linked to the anti-national and colonial interests of foreign producers, above all those of North American cinema and the monopoly it has imposed on us. Of about 500 films shown in 1962, 300 were in English, and most of them North American, while some 30 were Argentinian.

An additional fact: Latin America has a potential market of 200 million spectators, more than enough to provide a natural market for our films. It would save us the effort of sporadic entry into other markets, and the outlay of hard currency which is being drained away in importing mediocre foreign films.

The urgent need, and only firm solution, must therefore be to guarantee the distribution and exhibition of nationally produced films in each of our countries individually, and in Latin America as a whole. This must come about through government action. The procedures may be different, but in the same way that a government can cancel an oil contract so, for the same reasons of the social good and with the same authority, that same government can and should regulate the prejudicial cultural and economic exploitation that comes with the uncontrolled flow of foreign films into its territory. Exhibitors and distributors justify their permanent blocking of nationally produced films by appealing to the spectator's right to choose what films he or she wishes to see. But this free-market sophism omits one small detail: that for an audience to choose a film, it must first be exhibited, which generally does not happen with national films, or does so only in appalling conditions. State aid, bank credits, and prizes are also means of stimulating the development of Latin American cinema, so long as inflation is avoided by making ticket-receipts the basis of the system. Film must be funded by its audience. As well as maintaining financial health, the fact that the audience pays for its tickets confirms its interest in the film, and keeps filmmakers committed to their audience.

Such a solution must be complemented by a reduction in non-essential industrial costs. We must have low-cost production. This may not provide an overall or permanent solution but it is at the very least the beginning of a solution in current circumstances. If it is valid for independent production in developed countries, it is even more so in underdeveloped countries. Such a formula would protect the independent producer from the fluctuations of recovering capital in a market where income from nationally produced films is uncertain. Furthermore, a more rapid recovery of production costs would allow the possibility of continuous investment in new productions. Low costs would also allow participation by non-state capital, which would free the filmmaker of all, or almost all, dependence on official credits, which restrict freedom, and always bring with them censorship and self-censorship. This kind of production also renews expressive

creativity, because it requires the replacement of the traditional crew by a more functional method of operation, adapted to the actual conditions of filming. Such a conception and practice of making films not with the resources one would like but with those which are possible, will determine a new kind of language, hopefully even a new style, the fruit of convergent economic and cultural necessity. We Latin American filmmakers must transform all such technical limitations into new expressive possibilities, if we are not to remain paralyze by them.

In the same way, the moment has come not only to oblige the "commercial" circuits to carry national films, but also to set up "independent" circuits in trade unions, schools, neighborhood associations, sports centers and in the countryside through mobile projection units. A circuit based in existing grass-roots organizations, where films can be shown which, because they are openly didactic (or documentary) or ideologically progressive, come up against the greatest resistance from "commercial" distributors and exhibitors.

For What Audience Do You Yourself Make Films?

Having set aside any residual notions of "art for art's sake," and committed ourselves to "useful" creation, we find our intention of the last few years, that of making films not for ourselves but for the audience, is no longer enough. Following our most recent experience, which was our first with a fictional feature shown to a so-called "ordinary" or "commercial" audience, we can no longer put off defining the audience—or, more precisely, the *class* of audience, in the economic and historical sense of the term—for whom we are making our films.

We'll not delay the answer. We are making our films for a working-class audience, both urban and rural. This is our most fundamental purpose. Let us spell it out very clearly. We are interested in making our future films *only* if they reach a working-class and peasant audience, an audience made up of workers from the existing industrial belts of our great cities, the urban and suburban proletariat in areas of newer industrialization, and peasants, small farmers and herdsmen on both small immigrant farms and large estates belonging to the oligarchy (where film, if it speaks the people's own language, can be a means of culture of unequalled impact, given existing rates of literacy). Then, having made this clear, let us add that we also wish to reach sections of the petty bourgeoisie and even of the bourgeoisie proper (the so-called "national bourgeoisie"), including them in the audience for this new cinema which seeks to awaken consciousness, and which is directed towards spectators who are open to being enlightened and also to working out matters for themselves in a new light.

But I am talking about Argentina as it is now, where there is no such cinema and no national cinema to stimulate the gathering together of such an audience, and where even if such a cinema did exist there would be nowhere to show it.

As for the rest of Latin America, we would say from what we know of it that the audience which interests us—I should say, which preoccupies us—will be made up of the same sections of the population everywhere, depending on variations in the degree of backwardness or development in each country, or whether it is dominated by an agricultural and rural economy, or is in the process of industrialization. To conjure away any fetishes which may make this proposal seem utopian, we would recall that the audience which already sees our "national films"—which are so scorned by the bourgeoisie and only accepted with reservations by the petty-bourgeoisie—is in its great majority already made up of the kinds of people we have described. But there is an urgent need here for large-scale market research, complete with tables and social statistics. Even in our country we still lack such research. It must be one of the priority tasks of the CLAC (Latin American Cinematography Centre) as it documents, analyzes and plans film production.

What Is the Revolutionary Function of Cinema in Latin America?

Underdevelopment is a hard fact in Latin America. It is an economic and statistical fact. No invention of the left, the term is used as a matter of course by "official" international organizations, such as the UN, or Latin American bodies, such as the OAS or the ECLA, in their plans and reports. They have no alternative.

The cause of underdevelopment is also well known: colonialism, both external and internal.

The cinema of our countries shares the same general characteristics of this superstructure, of this kind of society, and presents us with a false image of both society and our people. Indeed, it presents no real image of our people at all, but conceals them. So, the first positive step is to provide such an image. This is the first function of documentary.

How can documentary provide this image? By showing how reality *is*, and in no other way. This is the revolutionary function of social documentary and realist, critical and popular cinema in Latin America. By testifying, critically, to this reality—to this sub-reality, this

misery—cinema refuses it. It rejects it. It denounces, judges, criticizes and deconstructs it. Because it shows matters as they irrefutably are, and not as we would like them to be (or as, in good or bad faith, others would like to make us believe them to be).

As the other side of the coin of this "negation," realist cinema also affirms the positive values in our societies: the people's values. Their reserves of strength, their labors, their joys, their struggle, their dreams.

The result—and motivation—of social documentary and realist cinema? Knowledge and consciousness; we repeat: the awakening of the consciousness of reality. The posing of problems. Change: from sub-life to life.

Conclusion: to confront reality with a camera and to document it, filming realistically, filming critically, filming underdevelopment with the optic of the people. For the alternative, a cinema which makes itself the accomplice of underdevelopment, is sub-cinema.

Translated by Malcolm Coad

For a Nationalist, Realist, Critical and Popular Cinema

Fernando Birri

The new Latin American cinema, which we continue to call "new" in order to exorcise any possible regression, is now about 25 years old. It was born in Cuba with *El megano* by García Espinosa, Gutiérrez Alea, Alfredo Guevara and José Massip; in Brazil with Nelson Pereira dos Santos; and in Argentina with the Documentary Film School of Santa Fe. Something I always like to remember is that it was born without any kind of, let's say, confabulation between us, but because it was in the air. We can now understand it with great clarity, thanks to something the Italians call *il senno di poi*, that is, the sign that comes afterwards, seeing history through the other end of the telescope. It was born because in that moment, in the middle of the '50s, in different places in Latin America, a generation of filmmakers was growing up who wanted to provide a reply to some of the problems of the moment, and who brought with them more questions than answers. They were questions that came from an historical necessity, a necessity in the history of our peoples; in the history of people awakening with great strength to the consciousness of occupying their place in history, a place denied us for so many years, a place which, once and for all, as the title of the beautiful Nicaraguan film has it, is a place of bread and dignity. These two ideas, I believe, explain something of the tension out of which the new Latin American cinema was created and motivated.

When we were born, nothing was clear and resolved; we had no recipes of prefabricated formulae. What we did know was that in

Screen, vol. 26, nos. 3–4, 1985, pp. 89–91. By permission of the publisher.

some ways this continent was so rich, so complex, so contradictory, so coarse, so exaltant in other ways, that it was a continent that was not reflected in the images produced by the three major Latin American cinemas, the only ones that existed: the Mexican, the Brazilian and the Argentinian cinemas.

This new cinema was born with two or three keys to comprehension, analysis, interpretation and expression. What were they? I remember that when *Tire dié* came out in 1958, it was accompanied by a short manifesto arguing for a national, realist and critical cinema. These were the three keys which in one way or another tried theoretically to illustrate a concrete formulation, the film that was *Tire dié*. From *Tire dié* we passed to *Los inundados*, which is already a fictional film though with a documentary base—and this is another constant in the new Latin American cinema, that is, the documentary support. A characteristic that has been progressively accentuated is the rupture with traditional genres: with what is traditionally understood by documentary; with what is traditionally understood or understandable as narrative.

Nelson Pereira dos Santos had always worked in narrative cinema. But apart from being the first attempt of this kind at Santa Fe, *Los inundados* was an attempt to achieve a greater diffusion of the film object, to explore the possibility of more extensive communication by the film with its public. And in that sense, the narrative construction has a much greater power of communication, and can embrace a much wider horizon than the documentary. Narrative cinema adds to the three previous keys the new key of the popular. In this way, the theoretical postulate which accompanied our work was the call for a national, realist and critical cinema, but, additionally, it was intrinsically related to a fourth, the popular, which is to say, it tried to interpret, express and communicate with the people.

This is also related to another tendency which the new Latin American cinema has always had, which is its aspiration to being an active cinema. What does this mean? It means that in the last instance it is a cinema which is generated within the reality, becomes concrete on a screen and from this screen returns to reality, aspiring to transform it. This is the fundamental idea. Over the years I have often asked myself what could be a common denominator for the new Latin American cinema. If I had to give a brief definition, I would say that it's a cinema which corresponds to what I called and continued to call a poetics of the transformation of reality. That's to say, that it generates a creative energy which through cinema aspires to modify the reality upon which it is projected. We applied this concept to documentary as much as narrative, to short as well as medium and long films, and

now we're applying it also to television, to which we are now equally dedicating our forces. In this concept of a poetics of the transformation of reality it is necessary, among other things, to have no abyss between life and the screen.

Federico García Lorca once introduced Pablo Neruda very beautifully at the University of Madrid, many years ago, before 1936, when Pablo wasn't yet fully Pablo. I remember that Federico said that Pablo was a poet—and he would have wanted to say this of our cinema—closer to blood than to ink, closer to death than philosophy, and who carried in his blood—and I would say this is true of our celluloid—that grain of madness without which it's not worth living. In short, the cinema that started to be made 25 years ago was a utopia, and now this cinema exists and has a continental dimension. This is an important datum. It is the only cinema in the history of cinema that expresses a continent in all the diversity of its cultural-historical connotations but which, at the same time, belongs to an economic infrastructure which perpetuates its so-called underdevelopment, and which places us face to face with common and shared problems of existence.

In this sense, then, it seems to me that the characterizations we're trying to develop of an active cinema for an active spectator—a spectator who doesn't consume passively as if merely digesting celluloid—also has another aspect: that it's a cinema of and for liberation, for economic, political and cultural liberation, and also the liberation of the image, which is to say, of the imagination. This also seems to me a characteristic of the new Latin American cinema, present in its origins, and course of development, deepening and clarifying with daily practice. And we feel this liberation of the image to be valid in the face of the successive crises through which the new Latin American cinema has passed. It was reflected in the Havana Film Festival in 1981, when we conducted a seminar on cinema and poetic imagination. This cinema, though it has to do above all with reality and has to intervene in the real in order to transform it, cannot do without the word poetic and the creative energy which the word contains. It is intrinsic in the need to expand our horizons. It is like the tension of an arrow in flight towards a target it has not yet reached. That is the new poetic-political cinema which is being produced in Latin America; and another indication of the crisis that is manifest in this Fifth Havana Festival (1984). Crisis is a word which manifestly some people don't at all like because it means above all change. Certainly, if the change is towards old age, senility, arteriosclerosis, one can understand . . . if the change is from life to death, obviously this crisis is fatal. But if the crisis is the first cry of the baby at its birth, or the rupture or

laceration of an adolescent who is beginning to pose the big questions which perhaps have no answer, the big insoluble questions, then it's very positive because it's a crisis of growth and a crisis of maturation.

Translated by Michael Chanan

Some Notes on the Concept of a "Third Cinema"

Octavio Getino

1. Antecedents

The first reference to the concept of a "Third Cinema" appeared in the Cuban film journal *Cine cubano* in March of 1969, in an interview with members of the Argentine *Cine Liberación* group. At that time, the group maintained that "there is a growing need for a "Third Cinema," one that would not fall into the trap of trying to engage in a dialogue with those who have no interest in doing so. It would be a cinema of aggression, a cinema that would put an end to the irrationality that has come before it; an *agit* cinema. This does not mean that filmmakers should take on exclusively political or revolutionary themes, but that their films would thoroughly explore all aspects of life in Latin America today. . . . This cinema, revolutionary in both its formulation and its consciousness, would invent a new cinematographic language, in order to create a new consciousness and a new social reality."

A few months later, in October 1969, the article "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences Regarding the Development of a Liberation Cinema in the Third World" (see the essay in this volume by Solanas and Getino) appeared in the journal *Tricontinental*, published by OSPAAAL in Paris. With these notes, the group hazarded a few theoretical definitions of a Third Cinema's objectives and methodol-

Tim Barnard, ed., *Argentine Cinema*. Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1986, pp. 99–108. Reprinted with revisions. Originally published as "Algunas observaciones sobre el concepto del 'Tercer Cine'" in *Notas sobre cine argentino y latinoamericano*. Mexico: Edimedios, 1984.

ogy. Certain ambiguities remained in this formulation of the theory, however, so these were clarified during the Latin American Filmmakers' Conference held in Viña del Mar, Chile, with the publication of the article "Militant Cinema, an Internal Category of Third Cinema." These publications had a significant effect on young filmmakers, not only in Latin America and the Third World but also in the developed countries, including the United States, Canada, France and Italy, and they were reprinted in books and specialized journals. From that time on, *Cine Liberación* as a group did not return to these themes. Its principal members—Fernando Solanas, Gerardo Vallejo, and the author of these notes—did, however, continue to discuss them in articles, interviews and debates published in specialized journals around the world.

It was essential that I note these antecedents in order for me to analyze—in a provisory and strictly personal manner—the value these theories on the Third Cinema, elaborated 10 years ago, may have today.[1]

The National Context as the Generator of Theory and Practice

The attempt to create a Third Cinema in Argentina was bound up in our own particular historical and political circumstances, marked during the last years of the 1960s by increasing levels of organization and mobilization within the popular resistance movements. Greater cohesion between the middle and working classes also developed during this period of military rule, culminating in 1973 with the resounding electoral victory of the *Frente Justicialista de Liberación*, led by the Peronist movement and supported by every progressive sector in the country.

The practical work of *Cine Liberación* was thus conditioned by the simultaneous growth of national resistance movements and the campaign to democratize the country. This situation basically defined the orientation and theories of the group. The language of the films produced by members of the group was similarly informed by the political reality of Argentina. In opposition to the prevailing notion of an *auteur* cinema, we developed this notion of a Third Cinema, an *agit* cinema, a cinema made collectively.[2] We didn't fully realize at the time the extent to which the Argentine reality of the late 1960s defined the content and the form of our work and its parallel theoretical elaboration. In turn, our work was destined to contribute to the development and the liberation of our country, as well as to certain debates in film circles. This is not to deny whatever universal value certain aspects of the theory may have; it is worth emphasizing, however, that

the value of theories such as these is always dependent on the terrain in which the praxis is carried out. Any attempt to consider an ideological construct universal would be erroneous without consideration of the national context at its root.

Practice as the Generator of Theory

In order to understand fully the ideas behind Third Cinema, we must note that its theoretical component arose after, and not before, the practical work of making films: that is to say, after the production and distribution of *La hora de los hornos* (The Hour of the Furnaces), directed by Solanas, which was begun in 1966 and finished in 1968.

Both Solanas and myself, while making this film, amassed a considerable amount of theoretical material. It was for our own use, as reflections on our ongoing practical work. It was this material that we drew upon when we developed the theories which were published between 1969 and 1971. It is difficult to imagine the subsequent international exposure of these theories had the film not existed. It was only through the existence of the film that we were able to refute the criticism of those who opposed our theories.

With this film, we demonstrated for the first time that it was possible to produce and distribute a film in a non-liberated country with the specific aim of contributing to the political process of liberation. To do this, we had to develop a different way of using film than that which had existed until that time.[3] It thus remains difficult even today to separate the concept of Third Cinema from the film *La hora de los hornos*, a demonstration of the interdependence of theory and practice. It is this practice which should be the principal focus of analysis today as it stimulated, even determined, the kinds of theories we put forward 10 years ago.

The Social Context as Mediator

The production and distribution of *La hora de los hornos* was possible, as I have already noted, because of the strong offensive of a popular resistance movement against a military government in full retreat. This opposition movement, basically led by the Peronist party, had a strong national tradition and organizational structure through the trade unions and on the local community level. This facilitated the distribution of alternative films through decentralized parallel circuits which would have been impossible to maintain under different political circumstances. Even so, the continuation of this practice required a theoretical base capable of guiding its development.

Another factor which should be noted in this discussion of the theories of the Third Cinema movement is the social background of

the filmmakers in the *Cine Liberación* group.[4] By the mid-1960s, as the "developmentalist" economic policies of the military rulers proved disastrous, the increasingly impoverished middle class began to seek a way out of the impasse in any manner available to them. During this same period, the well-organized working class frustrated several attempts to subvert certain fundamental democratic institutions in the Argentine political process. It was also a time when events abroad, particularly the Cuban revolution, were having an effect in Argentina. This revolution was being idealized, even by the middle class, as a universal model of political organization for Latin America.

Naturally the working class, hardened by decades of struggle in which it was the principal—and often solitary—protagonist, experienced this period differently than the middle class. Historically, the working class exercised a hegemony on the process of national liberation. The middle class could only hope to join this revolutionary process, from which it had previously kept its distance at every critical historical juncture.

La hora de los hornos, and the other films made by *Cine Liberación*, must be analyzed in this context, that of middle class intellectuals caught up in insurrectionary mobilizations, influenced by the cultural and political traditions of the working class movement but still embodying contradictions inherited from the neo-colonization of Argentina.

For my part, I believe that we too were not free of this dynamic. *Cine Liberación* was, before anything else, our fusion as intellectuals with the reality of the working class. This determined the tentative and inconclusive nature of our proposals. "Until now," we emphasized in "Towards a Third Cinema," "we have put forward practical proposals but only loose ideas—just a sketch of the hypotheses which were born of our first film, *La hora de los hornos*. We thus don't pretend to present them as a sole or exclusive model but only as ideas which may be useful in the debate over the use of film in non-liberated countries."

2. The Theory and Practice of Third Cinema in Argentina

We can identify three principal stages in the work of the *Cine Liberación* group:

i) that of the group's formation and initial activities as part of the resistance against the Argentine military governments of Onganía, Levingston, and Lanusse;

ii) that of its open collaboration with the democratic and popular government in power in 1973–74, until the death of President Perón;
iii) that of its withdrawal into a new form of resistance, which is the current stage, the stage of exile.

The First Stage: 1966–1970/71

This first stage of the group's activities is delineated, approximately, by the years 1966 and 1970/71. This was the period when the work with the greatest international impact was produced. I refer here primarily to the film *La hora de los hornos*, directed by Solanas and on which I worked as co-author: this film established the base from which the group would work, both within Argentina and abroad. When the film was finished, we began the other, no less important task of setting up parallel distribution circuits for the film through trade unions and community and Peronist Youth organizations.

During this period young filmmakers began to organize, together with Peronist activists and other progressive groups, giving rise to testimonial films and documentaries about what was happening in Argentina at the time. The national trade union CGT [Confederación General de Trabajadores], for example, put out the newsreel *Cineinformes de la CGT de los argentinos* at this time.

As work progressed on the practical levels of production and distribution, the group published its three major theoretical pieces: "La cultura nacional, el cine, y *La hora de los hornos*" ("National Culture, Cinema, and The Hour of the Furnaces," Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, *Cine cubano* no. 56/57, Havana, March 1969); "Hacia un tercer cine" ("Towards a Third Cinema," Solanas and Getino, *Tricontinental* no. 13, OSPAAAL, Paris, October 1969); and "Cine militante: una categoría interna del tercer cine" ("Militant Cinema, an Internal Category of Third Cinema," Solanas and Getino, mimeograph, Viña del Mar, 1971). The group also published material in the periodicals *Notas de Cine Liberación* and *Sobres de cultura y liberación*. The latter was published by a united front of visual artists, students and political activists with objectives similar to our own. We also made films throughout this period, of course, which were always barred from conventional distribution circuits. It was only through the popular organizations that we were able to distribute them.

The Second Stage: 1971–1974

This stage, which saw our work having fewer international repercussions, led instead to our films really taking root in national life. We ran the risk of having our films censored and began to make films

intended for commercial release through normal distribution channels. The first film to do this was Gerardo Vallejo's *El camino hacia la muerte del Viejo Reales* (Old Man Reales' Road to Death, 1970). I made *El familiar* (The Relative, 1973) and Solanas made *Los hijos de Fierro* (The Children of Fierro, begun in 1972 and finished in 1977 in exile). Similar films, made outside our group but from the same "liberation cinema" perspective, should be noted as well, especially *Operación masacre* (Operation Massacre, 1972) by Jorge Cedrón.

Numerous short films were made in regional centers throughout the country. In Tucumán, for example, Vallejo made *Testimonios tucumanos* and later *Testimonios de la reconstrucción*, which were screened on the regional television network operated by the university of that province.

This new approach required us to formulate new ideas in our written material as well. The magazine *Cine y Liberación* appeared in 1972 and reflected the popular resistance which by then was poised to take power. It was also during this period that we made two important documentaries in Madrid with Perón for the Peronist movement, *Actualización política y doctrinaria para la toma del poder* (Political and Theoretical Renewal Towards the Taking of Power) and *La revolución justicialista* (The Justicialist [Peronist] Revolution). In order to distribute these films, we used—and expanded—the parallel circuits we had developed for *La hora de los hornos*. The demand for these two films, particularly the latter, in fact surpassed the demand for our earlier film, and we made more than 50 16mm copies of *La revolución justicialista*.

This double-edged production strategy, with some films aimed at commercial audiences and others made for the parallel circuits, was accompanied by the organization of filmmakers, and not only activists but others from the mainstream of the industry who were being politicized by events of the day. At this time, our group was composed of filmmakers, critics, actors, independent producers, short filmmakers, technicians and film workers united by the pressing need to develop a project of national liberation, both for the country and for its cinema. With the liberation of the country in 1973 we were able to take part in the formulation of new policies in the film industry. It was during this period that I was asked to head the film classification board, a task I shared with all those concerned with the real development of our film industry.[5]

It did not take long before the group's work in this period was denounced, by the extreme Left before anyone else, who accused us of being "opportunists" and "bureaucrats." Afterwards the extreme Right joined in with different but undoubtedly more forceful arguments. As

far as the Left is concerned, there were some extreme tendencies at work in the country at that time, which had little popular support. Their leaders confused tactics with strategy and the means with the end. Their film activity they called "guerrilla cinema," which appropriated our theories of several years earlier and adopted them as a dogmatic bible. They saw in our work a supposed retreat into progovernment propaganda, not distinguishing between support for a government elected by 70% of the people and support for the armed forces. This ultra-Left offensive, launched in order to create obstacles to the democratic process, attempted to initiate a "popular revolutionary war" which actually led to the creation of minuscule ghettoized groups as alienated from the national will as were the paramilitary groups of the far Right.[6]

The Third Stage: 1974–

From 1974 on, after the death of Perón, the political project that the majority of the people had set in motion a year earlier began to falter. The imperialist offensive, visible in the events around us in Uruguay, Bolivia and Chile,[7] coincided with this weakening, which unfolded rapidly. It became clear that the force and cohesion of the popular movements in those countries—and in Argentina—were not as strong as we had imagined. In addition, the international solidarity promised us by those who make revolutionary chatter a way of life failed to materialize, this aid coming only after our defeat and to the benefit of the military government.[8]

We are now living in a time when the repression is so severe that we can't make films either above ground or underground. To speak of a "guerrilla cinema," for example, would be absurd. To attempt to make that kind of cinema in Argentina today would undermine the position of the working classes rather than strengthen it. *Cine Liberación* thus abandoned the use of "guerrilla" tactics, which to our mind had validity during the popular offensive but ceased to do so after 1973. It was precisely during this latter period that "militant cinema," at least that form of it practiced by us, in fact deepened its militancy by involving itself in the everyday political tasks of the masses, renouncing all forms of vanguardism which were outside the newly created democratic process.

As we had established during the earlier stage of our work, we prefer to err with the people rather than to take the "correct line" without them. It was not a coincidence, then, that just as we launched *La hora de los hornos* the orthodox Marxist Left, in Paris and Buenos Aires, joined the Right and attacked our position. We were "populist" and "fascist" to the former yet "subversive" and "communist" to the latter.

Both groups used essentially the same intimidation tactics, differing only in their choice of adjectives to describe us.

The change in our practical course during this period modified our theoretical positions, although these were not set out in written form as they were during the earlier stage. Instead, we strove to realize some of the ideas we had formulated earlier, particularly our search for a new film language capable of expressing our social reality with more insight and rigor. This entailed opening up to new genres and styles which could not be classified as documentary films. We wanted to contribute to the decolonization of our country's movie screens and thus put an end to the cultural and economic dependency of our film industry.

We thus entered into a period of critical revision and self criticism. To do so in the realm of practice seems to me the best method, in that the self criticism is constantly being verified by the concrete rendering of ideas, ideas that are always tied to the necessities of the national reality and to questions of political strategy.

Translated by Timothy Barnard

Notes

1. This article was written in the late 1970s while the author was in exile in Peru and when Argentina was ruled by its bloodiest military dictatorship ever, which not only suppressed radical filmmaking but virtually dismantled the commercial film industry [trans.].

2. In *Cine Liberación*'s schema, "First Cinema" was the classical cinema of Hollywood and Western Europe; "Second Cinema" was the *auteur* cinema which sprang up in these same centers in the early 1960s; and "Third Cinema" was a radical liberation cinema produced in the Third World and marked not only by different aesthetic and political concerns but by its challenge to the very system of commercial film production and consumption [trans.].

3. Not only was *La hora de los hornos* seen semi-clandestinely through a network of trade unions and activist groups, as the author mentions below, but it was structured in a way to generate audience discussion in an attempt to render the film-viewing experience less passive [trans.].

4. Solanas, for example, was an extremely successful director of short advertising films in the early 1960s and as late as 1965 had attempted to make a fiction film in the mainstream of the film industry [trans.].

5. The classification board was a committee of censors appointed from influential interest groups like the church, the military, "moral defense" groups, etc. Getino revamped the appointment procedure to include trade unions, academics and the general public as among those groups represented. For a brief period—until Perón's death in 1974 and Getino's subsequent replacement by a fanatical censor—no films other than pornography were cut or banned and the classification system was revised to include warnings of such things as overt racism alongside the usual moral cautions [trans.].

6. The film group Getino is referring to here is that known as *Cine Grupo de la Base*, whose principal figure was Raymundo Gleyzer. The group made the film *Los traidores* (The Traitors), about the betrayal of Peronism by strong-arm reactionary trade union bosses—Peronism was always an untenable and contradictory alliance of Left- and Right-wing elements—in 1974. Gleyzer was abducted by a paramilitary death squad in 1976 and is counted among the country's "disappeared" [trans.].

7. There were military coups in Bolivia in 1971 and in Chile and Uruguay in 1973 [trans.].

8. Getino is referring to the seemingly inexplicable cordiality between the U.S.S.R. and the Argentine military regime, which was engaged in a brutal campaign against domestic agents of "international communism" [trans.].

The Viewer's Dialectic

Tomás Gutiérrez Alea

Introduction

Twenty years after taking power, the Revolution has left behind its most spectacular moments. Back in those days our shaken land offered an image, an unusual and one-time-only image: that incredible caravan accompanying Fidel as he arrived in Havana, the bearded rebels, the doves, the vertigo of all the transformations, the exodus of the traitors and timorous ones, the henchmen's trials, and the enemy's immediate response and, as for us, we experienced the nationalizations, the daily radicalization of the revolutionary process followed by the armed confrontations, the sabotages, the counterrevolution in the Escambray mountains, the Bay of Pigs invasion and the October Missile Crisis.

Those events in themselves evidently revealed the profound changes occurring at a pace nobody could have foreseen. For cinema, it was almost sufficient just to record events, to capture directly some fragment of reality, and simply reflect the goings-on in the streets. These images projected on the screen turned out to be interesting, revealing and spectacular.[1]

In these circumstances, stimulated or, rather, pressured by ever-changing reality, Cuban cinema emerged as one more facet of reality within the Revolution. Directors learned to make films while on the go and played their instruments "by ear" like old-time musicians.

Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *The Viewer's Dialectic*. Havana, Cuba: José Martí Publishing House, 1988, pp. 16–41. By permission of the Agencia Literaria Latinoamericana.

They interested viewers more by what they showed than by how they showed it. In those first years Cuban cinema put the emphasis on the documentary genre and little by little, as a result of consistent practice, it acquired its own physiognomy and dynamism which have enabled it to stand with renewed force, beside more developed film styles which are older but also more "tired."

Now all of that has become part of our history; our consistent revolutionary development carries us inevitably toward a process of maturation, of reflection, and analysis of our accumulated experiences.

The current stage of institutionalization we are living through is possible only because it is based on the high degree of political awareness which our people have attained as a result of years of incessant fighting. But this stage also requires the masses' active, increased participation in the building of a new society. Increasingly, a greater and greater responsibility falls on the masses and, for that reason, we can no longer let the public merely cling enthusiastically and spontaneously to the Revolution and its leaders and, to the extent that the government passes on its tasks to the people, the masses have to develop ways of understanding problems, of strengthening their ideological coherence and of reaffirming daily the principles which give life to the Revolution.

Everyday events occur now in a different way. The images of the Revolution have become ordinary, familiar. In some ways we are carrying out transformations that are even more profound than earlier ones, but they are not as "apparent" now nor are they immediately visible to the observer. These changes, or transformations, are not as surprising nor do the people respond to them only with applause or with an expression of support. We no longer crave the same kind of spectacular transformations as we did fifteen or twenty years ago. Cuban cinema confronts that new and different way of thinking about what social processes are going to hold for us because our film draws its strength from Cuban reality and endeavors, among other things, to express it. Thus we find it no longer sufficient just to take the cameras out to the street and capture fragments of that reality. This can still be a legitimate way of filmmaking, but only when, and if, the filmmaker knows how to select those aspects which, in close interrelation, offer a meaningful image or reality, which serves the film as a point of both departure and arrival. The filmmaker is immersed in a complex milieu, the profound meaning of which does not lie on its surface. If filmmakers want to express their world coherently, and at the same time respond to the demands their world places on them, they should not go out armed with just a camera and their sensibility but also with

solid theoretical judgment. They need to be able to interpret and transmit richly and authentically reality's image.

Furthermore, in moments of relative détente, capitalism and socialism air their struggle, above all, on an ideological level and, on that level, film plays a relevant role both as a mass medium, in terms of diffusion, and as a medium of artistic expression. The level of complexity at which the ideological struggle unfolds makes demands on filmmakers to overcome completely not only the spontaneity of the first years of the revolutionary triumph but also the dangers inherent in a tendency to schematize. Filmmakers may fall into this trap if they have not organically assimilated the most advanced trends, the most revolutionary ones, the most in vogue, especially those which speak to the social function which the cinematic show ought to fulfill. That is, filmmakers create cultural products which may attain mass diffusion and which manipulate expressive resources that have a certain effectiveness. Film not only entertains and informs, it also shapes taste, intellectual judgment and states of consciousness. If filmmakers fully assume their own social and historical responsibilities, they will come face to face with the inevitable need to promote the theoretical development of their artistic practice.

We understand what cinema's social function should be in Cuba in these times: It should contribute in the most effective way possible to elevating viewer's revolutionary consciousness and to arming them for the ideological struggle which they have to wage against all kinds of reactionary tendencies and it should also contribute to their enjoyment of life. . . . With this much in mind, we want to establish what might be the highest level which film—as a show—could reach in fulfilling this function. Thus, we ask ourselves to what degree a certain type of show can cause the viewers to acquire a new socio-political awareness and a consistent action thereof. We also wonder what that new awareness and action consists of that should be generated in spectators once they have stopped being spectators, that is, when viewers leave the movie theater and encounter once again that other reality, their social and individual life, their day-to-day life.

Capitalist cinema, when reduced to its state as a commodity, rarely tries to give answers to these questions. On the other hand (and for other reasons) socialist cinema has not ordinarily fully met that demand. Nevertheless, finding ourselves in the midst of the Revolution, and at this particular stage of building socialism, we should be able to establish the premises of a cinema which would be genuinely and integrally revolutionary, active, mobilizing, stimulating, and—consequently—popular.

The expressive possibilities of the cinematic show are inexhaustible: to find them and produce them is a poet's task. But on that point, for the time being, this analysis can go no further, for I am not focusing on film's purely aesthetic aspects but, rather, trying to discover in the relation which film establishes over and over again between the show and the spectator the laws which govern this relation and the possibilities within those laws for developing a socially productive cinema.

"Popular" Film and People's Film

Of all the arts, film is considered the most popular. Nevertheless, this has not always been the case. For a long time, confusion reigned as to whether film was an art or not and that confusion continues to exist around film's popular nature.

Today it can still be said that cinema is marked by its class origin. During its short history, it has had moments of rebellion, searching and authentic success as an expression of the most revolutionary tendencies. Nevertheless, to a large extent, cinema continues to be the most natural incarnation of the petty bourgeois spirit which encouraged cinema at its birth more than eighty years ago.

At that time, capitalism was entering its imperialist phase. In the beginning, the modest invention of a machine made to capture and reproduce reality's moving images was no more than an ingenious toy used at fairs where spectators could let themselves be transported to the farthest reaches of the world without moving from their seats. Very soon the toy left the fairground but that does not mean to say that it achieved a more dignified and respectable status. It developed into a real show-business industry and began to mass produce a kind of merchandise able to satisfy the tastes and to encourage the aspirations of a society dominated by a bourgeoisie which extended its power into every corner of the world. From the beginning, cinema developed along two parallel paths: "true" documentation of certain aspects of reality and, on the other hand, the pursuit of magic fascination. Film has always moved between those two poles: documentary and fiction. Very soon cinema became "popular," not in the sense that it was an expression of the people—of the sectors most oppressed and most exploited by an alienating system of production—but, rather, in the sense that it could attract a heterogeneous public, the majority, avid for illusions.

Perhaps more than any other medium of artistic expression, cinema cannot get rid of its state as a commodity; the commercial success it achieves pushes it on to vertiginous development. It has become a

complex and costly industry and it has had to invent all kinds of formulae and recipes in order that the show it offers pleases the broadest public; huge audiences are what cinema depends on for its very survival. Therefore it was cinema's state as a commodity and its "popular" nature—more than the fact that it was a medium still in its infant stage—that provoked the resistance which existed in circles that paid unconditional reverence to "cultured" art; they did not want to elevate cinema to the category of true art. Art and the people didn't get along.

Then there were those who thought that cinema, to be art, should translate the master works from universal culture and therefore many pretentious, gilded, heavy and rhetoric works, which had nothing to do with the emerging film language, were filmed. Aside from those detours, cinema constituted a human activity which fulfilled better than others a fundamental necessity for enjoyment. In film practice, as it directed itself fundamentally toward that objective, film language began to mature and discover expressive possibilities which enabled cinema to achieve an aesthetic assessment although without intending to do so.

Hollywood cinema, with its pragmatic sense, developed furthest in that direction. It was the most vital and the richest in technical and expressive discoveries. As of the beginning of this century, it developed different genres—comedies, westerns, gangster films, historical superproductions, melodramas—which rapidly became "classics." That is to say, the genres consolidated themselves as formal models and reached a high level of development; at the same time, they became empty stereotypes. They were the most effective expression of a culture of the masses as a function of passive consumers, of contemplating and heartbroken spectators, while reality demands action from them and, at the same time, eliminates all possibilities for that action.

Cinema can create genuine ghosts, images of lights and shadows which cannot be captured. It is like a shared dream. It has been the major vehicle used to encourage viewers' false illusions and to serve as a refuge for viewers. It acts as a substitute for that reality in which the spectators are kept from developing humanly, and which, as a sort of compensation, allows them to daydream.

Film equipment and the means of film production were invented and created in the interests of bourgeois tastes and needs. Film rapidly became the most concrete manifestation of the bourgeois spirit, in objectifying its dreams. Clearly, for the bourgeoisie, film did not represent an extension of work, nor of school, nor of daily life with its many tensions; it was neither a formal ceremony nor a political discourse. The first thing burdened spectators looked for in cinema was

gratification and relaxation to occupy their leisure time. Surely, most cinematic production rarely went beyond the most vulgar levels of communicating with the public. The important thing was how much money could be obtained with the product and not to concern for high artistic quality.

In the 1920s the European avant-garde also made its incursion into filmmaking and left behind a few works which explored a vast range of expressive possibilities. But that was a vain attempt to rescue film from the vulgarity to which commercialism had condemned it. It could not put down roots. However, thanks to a few exceptional works, that movement was not completely sterile.

But it wasn't until the creation of Soviet film that the art world began to officially accept the evidence that not just a new language had been born but also a new art. This was because of the theoretical preoccupation of the Soviet directors and the practical support given to the new medium. "Collective art *par excellence*, destined for the masses," it was called then. Soviet cinema attained a real closeness to the movement of radical social transformation which was taking place. It was a collective art because it combined diverse individuals' experience and because it drew nourishment from artistic practice in other media as a function of a new art, a specifically different art, which became definitely accepted as such. It was destined for the masses, and popular, because it expressed the interests, aspirations and values of broad sectors of the population which at that time were carrying history onward. That first moment of Soviet cinema left a deep imprint on all filmmaking that was to follow and, today, the most modern filmmaking continues to drink from its fountains and nourish itself from that cinema's explorations, experiments and theoretical achievements which still have not been completely tapped.

The first years of sound-track filmmaking coincided with the capitalist economic crisis of 1929. Cinema consolidated itself as an audiovisual medium and the production apparatus became so complex that, for a long time, it was neither possible to produce films outside the big industry nor to side-step that industry's interests. In spite of that, in the 30s, the U.S. film industry produced a few works with a critical vision of society and the times. These films maintained all the conventions of an established and purified medium, but they also demonstrated an authentic realism in dealing with important contemporary themes. This cinema, which spoke about social conflicts afflicting everyone, arose at a favorable time, but very soon veered towards complacent reformism. Those were the years of the Hays Code,[2] also known as the code of propriety, an instrument for censorship and propaganda which responded to the interests of big finance capital and

which indicated the narrow ideological straits which U.S. cinema would traverse for a long time.

Toward the end of World War II, with wounds still open and under politically favorable circumstances, Italian neo-realist cinema emerged. With all its political and ideological limitations, it was a living, fecund movement insofar as it went the route of an authentically popular cinema.

In the heat of the post-war period in France, a "new-wave" of young directors appeared who threw themselves impetuously into revolutionizing filmmaking without going beyond the limits of the petty bourgeois world. Among them, Godard stands out as the great destroyer of bourgeois cinema. Taking Brecht as his point of departure —and the New Left as his point of arrival—he tried to make revolution on the screen. His genius, inventiveness, imagination, and clumsy aggressiveness gave him a privileged place among the "damned" filmmakers. He managed to make anti-bourgeois cinema but he could not make people's cinema. Noteworthy epigones like Jean-Marie Straub, admirable for his almost religious asceticism, have already institutionalized that position and some think they are making a revolution in the superstructure without needing to shake up the base . . .

Another phenomenon inscribed in those searches for a revolutionary filmmaking practice is that cinema called "parallel," "marginal" or "alternative." This cinema has emerged in the last few years due to the development of technology and equipment which permit the production of relatively cheap films. It lies within the reach of small, independent groups and revolutionary militants. In this cinema, revolutionary ideology is openly put forth. It is a political cinema which should serve to mobilize the masses and channel them toward revolution. As a revolutionary practice it has been effective within the narrow limits in which it operates but it cannot reach large numbers, not only because of the political obstacles it encounters within the distribution and exhibition system, but also because of its style. Most people continue to prefer the more polished product which the big industry offers them.

In the capitalist world—and in a good part of the socialist world—the public is conditioned by specific conventions of film language, by formulae and genres, which are those of bourgeois commercial filmmaking. This occurs so often that we can say that cinema, as a product originating from the bourgeoisie, almost always has responded better to capitalism's interests than to socialism's, to bourgeois interests more than to proletarian ones, to a consumer society's interests more than to a revolutionary society's interests, to alienation more than to non-alienation, to hypocrisy and lies more than to the profound truth . . .

Popular cinema, in spite of its many notable exponents, and few exceptional phenomena, has not always been able fully to fuse revolutionary ideology with mass acceptance. As for us, we cannot accept simple numerical criteria to determine the essence of a people's cinema. Clearly, in the final analysis, when we talk about the *broad* masses, we mean the people. But such a criterion is so wide and so vague that it becomes impossible to apply any kind of value judgment to it. The number of inhabitants in a country, or any sector of a country, is no more than a group as a whole, which considered as such, abstractly, is meaningless. If we want to find some kind of concrete criterion of what *popular* means it is necessary to know what those people represent, not just in terms of geographical location, but also in terms of the historical moment and their specific class. It is necessary to distinguish within that broad group which groups—the broad masses—best incarnate, consciously or unconsciously, the lines of force which shape historical development or, in other words, move towards the *incessant betterment of living conditions on this planet.* And if the criterion for determining *popular* accepts as its basis that distinction, we can say that its essence lies in what would be the best *thing* for those broad masses, i.e., that which best suits their most vital interests.

It is true that short-term interests sometimes obscure the long-term ones, and that one may often lose sight of one's final objectives. To be more precise: *popular* ought to respond not only to immediate interests (expressed in the need to enjoy oneself, to play, to abandon oneself to the moment, to elude . . .) but also to basic needs and to the final objective: transforming reality and bettering humankind. Therefore, when I speak about popular film, I am not referring to a cinema which is simply accepted by the community, but rather to a cinema which *also* expresses the people's most profound and authentic interests and responds to these interests. In accordance with this criterion (and we must keep in mind that in a class society, cinema cannot stop being an instrument of the dominant class), an authentically popular cinema, that is, a people's cinema can be fully developed only in a society where the people's interests coincide with the state's interests; that is, in a socialist society.

During the construction of socialism, when the proletariat has not yet disappeared as a class exercising its power through a complex state apparatus and differences persist between city and countryside, between intellectual and manual work, when mercantile relations have not yet disappeared, and along with them certain manifestations—

conscious or unconscious—of bourgeois ideology (or, even worse, petty-bourgeois ideology), when there is still an insufficient material base to depend on and, above all, when imperialism still exists somewhere in the world, art's social function acquires very specific shadings in keeping with the most urgent needs and objectives, the most immediate tasks people set for themselves when they begin to feel owners of their destiny and work for its fulfillment.[3] In this case, art's function is to contribute to the best enjoyment of life, at the aesthetic level, and it does this not by offering a ludicrous parenthesis in the middle of everyday reality but by enriching that very reality. At the cognitive level, it contributes to a more profound comprehension of the world. This helps viewers develop criteria consistent with the path traced by society. On the ideological level, finally, art also contributes to reaffirming the new society's values and, consequently, to fighting for its preservation and development. If it is true that at this stage the ideological level is given priority, its effectiveness here stands in direct relation to the effectiveness of the aesthetic and cognitive level.

I will try to establish which approaches might be appropriate for cinema, as one of art's specific manifestations, to be able to move toward those objectives.

From Film Show in Its Purest Sense to the "Cinema of Ideas"

As with literature, film has proceeded to establish certain basic genres according to the expressive needs of each specific material. In the same way that we have journalism—magazines and newspapers—fictional literature and essays with all their variety and shadings, all their own resources and characteristics, in film we have newsreels, shorts and feature-length films. Superficially we can point out affinities between newsreels and daily journalism, between shorts and certain kinds of articles and reports—the kind which usually appear in magazines and between feature-length films and fictional literature, especially novels, or—and we see this more and more—the essay. But these similarities are rather obvious at first glance. Of more interest is to define some peculiarities of the basic cinematic genres and to underline the fact that, as also happens in literature, this division is conventional, and the frontiers which separate them do not hinder the interchange of expressive resources and their own specific elements.

Newsreels offer primarily direct reportage of contemporary events; certain events with a specific significance are selected by the camera and projected on the screen to inform us about what is happening in the world. One usually does not receive a profound analysis of these

events' significance but because of their very selection and form of presentation political criteria and, obviously, ideology are manifest. First of all, because of the emphasis on information, the newsreel's validity is short-lived. Nevertheless, and at second glance, these newsreels constitute a body of material that is testimony to an epoch, and the importance of which is not always predictable. That is, these newsreels can acquire increased historical value and constitute the raw materials for analytic re-elaboration at a later date. Such a double function turns the newsreel into a most important political instrument. The emphasis here lies in its ideological (political) and cognitive aspects. The aesthetic aspect is subordinate to them, which is not to say that it does not exist or cannot—or should not—play a decisive role in the greater or lesser efficacy of the other two aspects.

The short film offers more variants. It can be a primarily informative report. It can be a documentary in which the events—images and sounds—brought to the screen are not captured directly from a real-life event but, rather, creatively elaborated by the director to emphasize a deeper meaning with an analytic objective. Here the cognitive aspect takes primacy. Also, the short film may include fictional works —little cinematic poems, the narration of a short story, etc. It is generally 20–40 minutes long; that length presupposes a more elaborated structure than the newsreel and more complexity in treating a theme. Consequently, the form allows the filmmaker to go into greater depth in terms of both information and analysis. Thus, its operation—its transcendency—is broader, and the aesthetic aspect usually takes on a certain significance.

The feature film is usually fiction. The plots are completely fabricated according to a preconceived idea and developed on the basis of dramatic principles. All this corresponds to an established convention, which can be either a support or a hindrance to the best and most coherent concretion of the idea which will serve as point of departure. On the other hand, in Cuba, we have extensively developed a type of feature-length documentary in which real-life events are recreated or shown exactly as they are captured by the camera at the moment of their occurrence. These events are arranged in such a way that they function as elements of a complex structure, through which the film can offer a more profound analysis of some aspect of reality. In addition, news reportage can be turned into a feature-length film, but that format is used infrequently and is generally determined by the exceptional importance of the events registered by the camera which on the screen are re-ordered so as to facilitate viewers' better understanding of them.

In Cuba, normal movie theater programming consists of a newsreel, a short documentary (or reportage) and a fiction feature. Thus, the basic genres, distinct but complementary, are seen in one sitting. Viewers can experience *various levels of mediation which bring them closer to or farther away from reality* and which can offer them a better understanding of reality. This game of approximations, produced through seeing various genres at one screening, does not always have the greatest coherence nor achieve the greatest level of "productivity," because they are films made independently of each other which may possibly be connected *a posteriori*. Nevertheless, this possibility of connections throws light on what could be achieved here, even if we are considering just the framework of a single film, in the elaboration of which the filmmaker has kept in mind this whole broad range of levels of approximating reality.

I want to focus on that genre which best answers the concept of "show" and which constitutes the basic product in any cinema: the feature fiction film.

First, I want to put aside a very specific genre: educational film. Even when operating with the same elements and resources as "show"-film, educational films are organized in terms of a special function: to complement, amplify, or illustrate, in a direct manner, classroom teaching. They are like textbooks but not a substitute for them. A student's attitude vis-à-vis educational film is radically different from the spectator confronting "show"-film. Classroom teaching demands of students a conscious effort, one directed toward acquiring specific knowledge. In contrast, spectators go to "show"-film in their leisure time to relax, to seek diversion, for entertainment, and to enjoy themselves . . . and if viewers do learn something, it is of a different nature and does not constitute the viewers' primary motivation.

Now then, without departing from the framework of "show"-film, and more specifically fictional film, we can find various options in the emphasis, according to the film's condition as a show or as a vehicle of ideas. We must keep in mind, of course, that always, to some extent, the show remains a bearer of ideology.

The superficial interpretation of the thesis which holds that the function of cinema—of art in general—in our society is to provide "aesthetic enjoyment" at the same time as "raising the people's cultural level" has again and again led some to promote additive formulae in which the "social" *content* (that, which is considered to be the educational aspect, creator of a revolutionary consciousness and also, at times, the simple diffusion of a slogan) must be introduced in an attractive *form*, or, in other words, adorned, garnished in such a way as to satisfy the consumers' tastes. It would be something like producing

a sort of ideological pap for easy digestion. Obviously, it is only a simplistic solution which considers form and content as two separate ingredients which you can mix in proportion, according to some ideal recipe. Furthermore, this attitude considers the spectator a passive entity. Such a perspective can only lead to bureaucratizing artistic activity. It does not have anything to do with a dialectical understanding of the process of an organic integration of form and content, in which both aspects are indissolubly united and, at the same time as they oppose each other, they interpenetrate each other, even to the point where they can take over each other's functions in that reciprocal interplay. That is, we are dealing with a complex and rich process of contradictions and possibilities for development, in which the formal, aesthetic and emotional aspects, on the one hand, and the thematic, educational and rational aspects, on the other, reveal certain affinities but also their own peculiarities. The diverse modalities of their mutual interaction (to the degree to which that interaction is organic, consistent with the premises which generate it) give rise to various levels of "productivity" (in terms of functionality, effectiveness and fulfillment of assigned functions . . .) in the work's relation to the spectator.

Later on, I will offer some considerations about the relation between the cinematic show and the spectator, and try to untangle certain mechanisms through which that relation takes place. For the time being, I only wish to point out that those various levels of productivity —or functionality—which the show may provide and which derive primarily from the manner in which the emphasis is distributed among the above mentioned aspects *are not excluding levels*. That is to say cinema, especially fiction film, is basically a show. Its function as a show in the purest sense, is to entertain, distract and offer an enjoyment that comes from representation. Represented are actions, situations and diverse things which have as their point of departure reality —in its broadest sense. These things constitute a fiction, another different, new reality which will enrich or expand the reality which has been already established or known up to this point.

Simple show is healthy to the extent that it does not obstruct viewers' spiritual development. But, one cannot forget that in the midst of a society immersed in class struggle, the recreational spirit which enlivens the show tends somewhat to reinforce the established values, whatever they are, since the show serves generally as an escape valve in the face of problems and tensions generated by a conflicting reality. At this level what is emphasized is the emotional aspect in general. Thus show, in its purest sense, just seeks to generate emotions in the spectator and to provide sensory pleasure, as, for instance, a sports event does. We should not view this with mistrust except when super-

ficiality becomes stupidity, when happiness becomes frivolity, when healthy eroticism becomes pornography, when, under the guise of simple entertainment, show becomes a vehicle for affirming bourgeois cultural traits, and when—consciously or unconsciously—it incarnates bourgeois ideology. That is, even "entertainment" films, which apparently "say nothing" and are seemingly simple consumer objects, could also fulfill the elemental function of spiritually enriching the spectator if they did not, to use a coined expression, contain "ideological deviationism." The concept of consumption in a capitalist society is not—and should not be—the same as in a socialist one.

But if we want to go further, if we want film to be good for something more (or for the same thing, but more profoundly), if we want it to fulfill its function more perfectly (aesthetic, social, ethical, ideological . . .), we ought to guarantee that it constitutes a factor in spectators' development. Film will be more fruitful to the extent that it pushes spectators toward a more profound understanding of reality and consequently, to the extent that it helps viewers live more actively and incites them to stop being mere spectators in the face of reality. To do this, film ought to appeal not only to emotion and feeling but also to reason and intellect. In this case, both instances ought to exist indissolubly united, in such a way that they come to provoke, as Pascal said, authentic "shudderings and shakings of reason."

Thus, it is not a question of an emotion to which one can add a dose of reason, ideas, or "content." Rather, it is emotion tied to the *discovery* of something, to the rational comprehension of some aspect of reality. Such emotion is qualitatively different from that which a simple show will elicit (suspense, the chases, terror, sentimental situations, etc.), although it might well be reinforced or impeded by those.

On the other hand, when cinema, in the well-intentioned process of shaping its objectives—to aptly fulfill its social function—neglects to fulfill its function as show and appeals exclusively to reason (to the viewers' intellectual efforts) it noticeably reduces its effectiveness because it disregards one of its essential aspects: enjoyment.

The development of art is expressed not only in a successive change in its functions according to the various social formations which generate art throughout history, but also as an enrichment and a greater complexity of the resources which art has at its disposal. From the magician cave artist to the artist of the scientific era, the *objet d'art* has taken on various successive functions: an instrument to dominate natural forces, an instrument for one class to dominate another, for affirming an idea, for communicating, for self-awareness, for developing a critical consciousness, for celebration, for evading reality, for compensation, or for simple aesthetic enjoyment. . . . In every

historical moment the accent is placed on one or another of these functions and the others are rejected. Nevertheless, we must not forget that all of these functions form one single body of accumulated experience and, out of all of them, some valuable element endures which will enrich the others. The various levels of comprehension (or of interpretation) of an artistic work become superimposed and express art's accumulation of multiple functions over the course of history. Thus, a cave artist is present in all true art, and if he was never effective enough to attract real bison, certainly he was able to mobilize the hunters. Suggestion continues to operate with greater or lesser success, according to the specific circumstances of each particular work. That is how so many artistic works operate when they prefigure victory over an enemy and exalt a warrior's heroism. But the course of history has given us another type of artist who works as well through reason, through understanding and who, in specific circumstances, fully attains his objective. The various functions which art has fulfilled have enriched artistic activity with new expressive resources. The magnificent arsenal of resources accumulated throughout history which contemporary art has at its disposal permits it to fully exercise its functions at all levels of comprehension, suggestion and enjoyment.

Show and Reality: The Extraordinary and the Everyday

Regarding those films which are usually seen on television and which mature spectators may feel uncomfortable with and find meaningless because they cannot coherently relate the films to the complex images of the world which they have formed during their lives, people may well ask, "What does this have to do with reality?" A child might answer with another question, "Well, isn't it just a movie?" The questions remain pending, of course. It would be a hard task to explain to a child how, for mature people, the sphere of reality is constantly articulated in more detail in one's mind, and how some things are left behind. It happens in such a way that an adult's image of the world comes to be very different from a child's. Mature adults keep discarding more or less apparent layers of reality, in order to draw closer and closer to its essence. They discriminate and assess reality's different aspects as a consequence of an ever deeper understanding of reality. That is why a mature person probably feels dissatisfied vis-à-vis such a film. But, on the other hand, the child's question does not allow for a quick, superficial response. Certainly a film is one thing and reality is another. We cannot forget that those are the rules of the game. Of

course, film and reality are not—cannot be—completely divorced from each other. A film forms part of reality. Like all man's works included in the field of art, film is a manifestation of social consciousness and also constitutes a reflection of reality.

With regard to cinema, there exists a condition which can be deceptive. The signs which cinematic language employs are no more than images of separate aspects of reality itself. It is not a question of colors, lines, sounds, textures and forms, but of objects, persons, situations, gestures, and expressions . . . which, freed from their usual, everyday connotation, take on a new meaning within the context of fiction. Film thus captures images of isolated aspects of reality. It is not a simple, mechanical copy. It does not capture reality itself, in all its breadth and depth. However, cinema can reach greater depth and generalization by establishing new relations among those images of isolated aspects. Thereby, those aspects take on new meaning—a meaning not completely alien to them, and can be more profound and more revealing—upon connecting themselves to other aspects and producing shocks and associations which in reality are dilute and opaque because of their high degree of complexity and because of day-to-day routine.

Here we may find the beginnings of a revealing operation—bound to reach an ever-growing degree of complexity and richness—which is specific to cinema because it is a language nourished by reality and which reflects reality through images of real objects which can actually be seen and heard as if it were a large ordering and sorting-out mirror. Such a way of looking at reality *through* fiction offers spectators the possibility of appreciating, enjoying, and better understanding reality.

But that must not confuse us. Cinematic realism does not lie in its alleged ability to capture reality "just like it is" (which is "just like it appears to be"), but rather lies in its ability to reveal, through associations and connections between various isolated aspects of reality—that is to say, through creating a "new reality"—deeper, more essential layers of reality itself. Therefore, we can establish a difference between the objective reality which the world offers us—life in its broadest sense—and the image of reality which cinema offers us within the narrow frame of the screen. One would be genuine *reality;* the other, fiction.

Now I would like to elaborate on how the cinematic show offers viewers an image of reality which belongs to the sphere of fiction, the imaginary, the unreal. In this sense it stands in relative opposition to the very reality it belongs to. Of course, the sphere of the real, in its broadest sense, includes social life and all man's cultural manifestations. Therefore, it encompasses the sphere of fiction itself, of show—as a cultural object. But, evidently, in fact, it is really a question of two different spheres, each with its own peculiarities, which can be characterized not only as two aspects of reality, but as two *moments* in the process of approximation to its essence. Show can be conceived as a mediation in the process of grasping reality. The moment of the show corresponds to the moment of abstraction in the process of understanding.

The artistic show inserts itself to the sphere of everyday reality (the sphere of what is continuous, stable and relatively calm . . .) as an extraordinary moment, as a rupture. It is opposed to daily life as an unreality, an other-reality, insofar as it moves and relates to the spectator on an ideal plane. (In this being *ideal* —separation from everyday life —it expresses its unusual and extraordinary character. Therefore, show is not opposed to the typical, but rather it can incarnate the typical as it is a selective process and an exacerbation of outstanding—significant—traits of reality.) We cannot say, however, that it is an extension of (daily) reality but, rather, that it is always an extension of (the artists' and the viewers') subjective reality to the extent that it objectifies man's ideological and emotional content.

Cinema can draw viewers closer to reality without giving up its condition of unreality, fiction, and other-reality as long as it lays down a bridge to reality so that viewers can return laden with experiences and stimulation. The sum of experience and information which viewers gain on the basis of this relation may not go beyond that—more or less active sensory level—, but can also bring about in viewers, once they have stopped being viewers and are facing that other aspect of reality (the viewers' own life, their daily reality), a series of reasonings, judgments, ideas and thus a better comprehension of reality itself and an adaptation of their behavior, of their practical activity. The spectator's response follows the moment of the show; is a result of the show . . .[4]

The most socially productive show surely cannot be one which limits itself to being a more or less precise ("truthful," servile . . .) reflection of reality just as reality offers itself in its immediacy. That would be no more than a duplication of the image we already have of reality; a redundancy, in short and, as such, would lack interest. We could hardly say that it is a show. If we claim that the show, that which manifests itself through what we call *fiction*, is introduced as a moment of rupture, of disturbance in the midst of daily reality, and in this sense opposes it and negates it, we must establish very clearly what this negation of reality ought to consist of so that it becomes socially productive.

There is a story of a painter, Chinese for all we know, who once painted a beautiful landscape in which you could see mountains, rivers, trees . . . rendered with so much grace, in accordance with the dictates of his imagination, that all a viewer needed was to hear the birds' songs and feel the wind pass between the trees to complete the illusion of standing in front of a real landscape and not a picture. The painter, once finished, stood there enraptured contemplating the landscape which had flowed from his head and hands. . . . He was in such ecstasy that he began to walk toward the picture and feel completely enveloped by the landscape. He walked among the trees, followed the course of the river, and withdrew further and further into the mountains until he disappeared toward the horizon.

A great finale for a creative artist, probably. But similar experiences of aesthetic ecstasy for any viewers ought to be conditioned so that they do not lose their way back and so that they can return to reality both spiritually enriched and stimulated so as to live better in it. For that reason, whatever the landscape of the Chinese painter offers with all of its mysterious charm, it represents the absolute negation of reality and thus (keeping to the plane of metaphor) death or insanity.

A show which exercises this kind of fascination for the spectator can be characterized as a "metaphysical negation" of reality. That is, a negation which tries to abolish reality through an act of evasion. Of course, nor would this be the most socially productive kind of show.

But, for a long time now, that has been the ideal kind of show for a class which is essentially hypocritical and impotent, but which has been capable of inventing the most sophisticated justification mechanisms to try to hide from itself the most profound levels of reality which it cannot—or does not want—to change. But that is not the case in a society which is rebuilding itself on a new basis, whose objective is to eliminate all vestiges of exploitation of man by man, which demands all its members' active participation and consequently the development of each person's social consciousness. Metaphysical negation, which tries to abolish reality through an act of evasion, opposes dialectical negation, which aims to transform reality through revolutionary practice. As Engels said, "Negation in dialectics does not mean simply saying no, or declaring that something does not exist, or destroying it in any way one likes."[5] Further on he says, ". . . therefore, every kind of thing has its characteristic kind or way of being negated, of being negated in such a way that it gives rise to a development, and it is just the same with every kind of conception or idea."[6] Therefore, a show which is socially productive will be that which negates daily reality (the false crystallized values of daily or ordinary consciousness) and at the same time establishes the premises of its own negation; that is, its negation as a substitute for reality or an object of contemplation. It is not offered as a simple means of escape or consolation for a burdened spectator, rather, it propitiates the viewers' return to the other reality—that which pushed them momentarily to relate themselves to the show, to become absorbed, to enjoy, to play. . . . They should not return complacent, tranquil, empty, worn out, and inert; rather, they should be stimulated and armed for practical action. This means that show must constitute a factor in the development, through enjoyment, of the spectators' consciousness. In doing that, it moves them from remaining simple, passive (contemplative) spectators in the face of reality.

The Contemplative and the Active Spectator

Show is essentially a phenomenon intended for contemplation. People, reduced momentarily to the condition of spectators, contemplate a peculiar phenomenon, the characteristic traits of which aim at the unusual, the remarkable, the exceptional, the out of the ordinary.

Certain real phenomena—natural or social phenomena—can indeed manifest themselves spectacularly: natural forces unleashed, grandiose landscapes, wars, mass demonstrations. . . . They constitute a show insofar as they break down the habitual image we have of reality. They offer an unfamiliar image, a magnified and revealing one, to the people contemplating them—the spectators. And just as reality can manifest itself spectacularly, so too can real show, the kind people provide for themselves in play or in artistic expression, be more or less spectacular in the degree to which it distances itself from, or draws closer to, daily reality. But in any case, show exists as such on behalf of the spectator. By definition spectators are people who contemplate and whose condition is determined not just by the characteristics or the phenomenon, but rather by the position which they as individuals (subjects) occupy in relation to it. People can be actors or spectators in the face of the same phenomenon.

Does this mean that the spectator is a passive being? In a general sense, not only all knowledge but the entire complex of interests and values which make up consciousness is shaped and developed, both socio-historically and individually, through a process which has as its point of departure the moment of contemplation (sensory consciousness) and culmination in the moment of rational or theoretical consciousness. We can say, therefore, that the condition of being spectator, as a moment in the process of the subject's appropriating or

interiorizing—a reality which includes, of course, the cultural sphere as a product of specific human activity—is fundamental.

But clearly, contemplation itself does not consist of a simple, passive appropriation by the individual: it responds to a human need to improve living conditions and already bears within it a certain activity. This activity can be greater or lesser depending not only on subjects and their social and historical locus, but also—and this is what we want to emphasize—on the peculiarities of the contemplated object, and on how these can constitute a stimulus for unleashing in the viewers another kind of activity, a consequential action beyond the show.

When I refer to "contemplative" spectators, I mean ones who do not move beyond the passive-contemplative level; inasmuch as "active" spectators, taking the moment of live contemplation as their point of departure, would be those who generate a process of critically understanding reality (including, of course, the show itself) and consequently, a practical, transforming action.

Viewers looking at a show are faced with the product of a creative process of a fictitious image which also stemmed from the artist's act of live contemplation of objective reality. Thus a show can be directly contemplated as an object in itself, as a product of practical human activity. But viewers can also refer to the more or less objective content reflected by the show, which functions as a mediation in the process of understanding reality.

When a relation takes place only at the first level, that is, when show is contemplated merely as an object in itself and nothing more, "contemplative" spectators can satisfy their need for enjoyment and aesthetic pleasure, but their activity, expressed fundamentally in accepting or rejecting the show, does not go beyond the cultural plane. Here the cultural plane is offered to people as a simple consumer object, and any reference to the social reality that conditions it is reduced to an affirmation of its values or, in other cases, to a complacent "critique."

In capitalist society, the typical consumer film show is the light comedy or melodrama. It has invariably had a "happy ending" and has provided, and to a certain degree continues to provide, a rather efficient ideological weapon to promote and consolidate conformism among large sectors of the population. First, there is a plot. In its numerous situations we are made to feel that the stable values of society are threatened, via the hero who incarnates those values, which, on an ideological plane, make up his physiognomy. That is to say, those are the values which (people almost never understand why this happens) have become sacred ideas and objects of worship and veneration

(homeland as an abstract notion, private property, religion, and generally all that which constitutes bourgeois morality). In the end those values are saved, and we leave the movie theater with the sensation that all is well, that there is no need to change anything. One veil after another has been drawn over the reality that prevents people from being happy and forces them to turn what could be an amusing game, a healthy entertainment, into an attempt at evasion onto which the individual, trapped in a web of relations preventing him from knowing and fully developing himself, hurls himself.

Show, as a refuge in the face of a hostile reality cannot but collaborate with all the factors which sustain such a reality to the extent that it acts as a pacifier, an escape valve, and conditions the contemplative spectator vis-à-vis reality. The mechanism is too obvious and transparent and has been denounced all too often.[7] Many solutions have been suggested for such an irritating situation, which inverts the role of the spectator-subject submitting him to the sad condition of object.

The "happy ending's" discredit, in the midst of a reality whose mere appearance violently disproved the rosy image sold to people, led to the use of other more sophisticated mechanisms. The most spectacular one, surely, has been the "happening," where the game with the spectator is taken to a level which is presumably corrosive for an alienating and repressive society. Not only does the happening give spectators an opportunity to participate, but it even drags them in against their will and involves them in "provocative" and "subversive" actions. But all this goes on, of course, clearly *within* the show where anything can happen and many things can be violated. What prevails is the unusual, the unexpected, the surprise, and the exhibitionism. . . . Furthermore, it can be as useful as a ritual which helps to shape a specific behavior. Generally, it can be very funny, especially for those who can afford to just look at things from above because undoubtedly that would give them a certain kind of relief for, in spite of the happening's seemingly truculent and disquieting appearance, it is an ingenious expedient, which in the final analysis helps to prolong the situation, not to change anything; in other words, to just sit and wait while those below reach some kind of an agreement.

In cinematic show, of course, there is no room for this kind of means to facilitate or provoke spectators' "participation" on the basis of unpredictability. Nevertheless, the problem of spectators' participation still persists. It demands a solution that is within—or better, based on—the cinematic show itself, which reveals how simplistically this problem has often been approached. The first thing this uneasiness reveals is something we frequently forget but which nevertheless may be an axiomatic truth: *the response one wants to arouse in the*

spectator is not only that which is elicited during the show, but also that which is elicited vis-à-vis reality. That is to say, what is fundamental is real participation, not illusory participation.

During periods of relative stability in a class society, there is minimal individual social participation. In one way or another, through physical, moral or ideological coercion, the individual's activity takes place mainly within the framework of the direct production of material goods, which mostly serve to meet the exploiting class' needs. Individual action outside this framework is illusory.

However, at those times when the class struggle is exacerbated, the level of people's general participation grows. At the same time, a leap occurs in the development of social consciousness. In those moments of rupture—extraordinary moments—spectacular events occur within social reality, and when faced with them, individuals take a stand in keeping with their own interests. Without a doubt, it is above all in these circumstances that we see revealed what Aimé Césaire referred to as the "sterile attitude of a spectator."[8] Reality demands that people take sides when faced with it, and that demand is fundamental to the relationship between man and the world at all times throughout history. If we consistently assume as a principle that "the world does not satisfy man, so he decides to change it through his activity,"[9] we must remember that man's activity, that taking of sides which becomes practical, transforming action, is conditioned by the type of social relations existing at any given moment. And in our case, in a society where we are building socialism, reality also demands partisan activity and a growing level of social participation from all those individuals who make up this society. This process is only possible if accompanied by a parallel development in social consciousness. The cinematic show falls within that process insofar as it reflects a tendency of the social consciousness which involves the spectators themselves and insofar as it can affect the spectators as a stimulus, but also as an obstacle, for consequent action. And when I speak about consequent action, I am referring to this specific type of participation, historically and socially conditioned, a concrete participation which implies people's adequate response to the problems of social reality, especially those of an ideological and political nature. What this is about, then, is stimulating and channeling spectators to act in the direction of historical movement, along the path of society's development.

To provoke such a response in the spectator it is necessary, as a first condition, that reality's problems be presented in the show, that concerns be expressed and transmitted, that questions be posed. That is to say, it is necessary to have an "open" show.

But the concept of "openness" is too broad; it is present at every level where the artistic work operates. By itself, openness does not guarantee the spectator's consequent participation. In the case of an open show presenting concerns that are not only aesthetic—as a source of active enjoyment—but rather conceptual and ideological, it becomes (without ceasing to be a *game* in the sense that every show is) a serious operation because it touches on underlying levels of reality.

Nevertheless to achieve the greatest efficacy and functionality, it is not enough for a work to be open—in the sense of indeterminate. The work itself must bear those premises which can bring the spectator to discern reality. That is to say, it must push spectators into the path of truth, into coming to what can be called a dialectical consciousness about reality. Then it could operate as a real "guide for action." One should not confuse openness with ambiguity, inconsistency, eclecticism, arbitrariness . . .

What can the artist base himself on in order to conceive a show which would not just pose problems but would also show viewers the road they ought to take in order to discover for themselves a higher level of discernment? Undoubtedly, here art must make use of the instruments developed by science for research; art must apply all methodological resources at hand and all it can gain from information theory, linguistics, psychology, sociology, etc. Show, insofar as it becomes the negative pole of the reality-fiction relationship, must develop an apt strategy for each circumstance. We must not forget that, in practice, spectators cannot be considered abstractions, but, rather, people who are historically and socially conditioned, in this way, the show must address itself first of all to concrete spectators to whom it must unfold its operative potential to the fullest.

Translated by Julia Lesage

Notes

1. Patricio Guzmán, in notes he wrote before making *Battle of Chile*, said at that time—the months which preceded the fascist coup—he never would have made a fictional film with actors reciting a text, because reality itself, which was unfolding before his very eyes, was changing tremendously. In times of social convulsion, reality loses its everyday character, and everything which happens is extraordinary, new, unique . . . The dynamics of change, the trends of development, the essence are manifested more directly and clearly than in moments of relative calm. For that reason, it attracts our attention and in that sense we can say it is spectacular. Surely, the best thing to do is to try to capture those moments in their purest state—documentary—and to leave the re-elaboration of those elements reality offers for a time

when reality unfolds without any apparent disturbance. Then fiction is a medium, an ideal instrument, with which to penetrate reality's essence.

2. This famous code sets forth, among other things, that film "builds character, develops right ideals, inculcates correct principles, and all this in attractive story form." Regardless of any discrepancy from the "right ideals" and "correct principles" which this revealing document tried to promote, it is interesting to see how it resorts to the most puerile mechanism—that spectators "hold up for admiration high types of characters." Without a doubt, that mechanism is the one which best reveals reactionary attitudes, because its only purpose is to mold an idealized and complaisant image of reality. (Moley, R., *The Hays Office*, "Code to Govern the Making of Talking, Synchronized and Silent Motion Pictures," New York: Bobbs-Merrill, Co., 1945, p. 246).

3. In the thesis about artistic and literary culture contained in the *Plataforma Programática del Partido Comunista de Cuba* (Havana: Ed. DOR, 1976, p. 90) we can read, "Socialist society calls for art and literature which, while providing aesthetic enjoyment, contribute to raising the people's cultural level. An extremely creative climate, which impels art and literature's progress as the legitimate aspiration of working people, must be achieved. Art and literature will promote the highest values, enrich our people's lives and participate actively in shaping the communist personality."

4. Certainly, TV has brought into the home the most spectacular images of reality. For example, I think about an average American drinking beer while watching television and seeing Saigon's police chief put a bullet through the skull of a prisoner in full public view, and all of this in color. Therefore, the *representation* of those moments has to adjust to new circumstances. But the most important thing is that an act so powerful, so unusual, so naked, once it is screened as show—that is to say, once its contemplation is made available to the viewers—is found to have notably reduced its potential as a generator of a consequent reaction in practice. Probably, the surprise would make the viewer jump up from his chair, but following that, he would go to the refrigerator to open up another beer, which would make him sleep soundly. After all, those events have become little by little everyday facts of life. What would we have to do to move this viewer? It is not enough that the show be real—and that it might be happening at the very moment that one looks at it—to generate a "productive" reaction in the spectator. For that it would be necessary, possibly, to resort to more sophisticated mechanisms.

5. Engels, F., *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962, p. 194.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

7. Brecht said: "The bourgeois passes beyond, in the theater, the threshold of another world which has no relation at all to daily life. It enjoys there a kind of venal emotion in a form of a drunkenness which eliminates thought and judgment" (Quoted in V. Klotz, *Bertolt Brecht*, Buenos Aires: La Mandragora, 1959, p. 138).

8. "And most of all beware, even in thought, of assuming the sterile attitude of the spectator, for life is not a spectacle, a sea of griefs is not a proscenium, a man who waits is not a dancing bear . . ." (Césaire, Aimé, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, Éditions Présence Africaine, Paris, 1971, p. 62).

9. Lenin, V.I., *Cuadernos filosóficos*, Havana: Editora Política, 1964, p. 205.

Part 2
Continental Development: Socio-historical Contexts and Modes of Production/ Consumption

An "Other" History

The New Latin American Cinema

Ana M. López

> The notion of Latin America exceeds all nationalisms. There is a common problem: misery. There is a common objective: the economic, political, and cultural freedom to make a Latin American cinema. An engaged, didactic, epic, revolutionary cinema. A cinema without frontiers, with a common language and common problems.
>
> Glauber Rocha, *Revoluçao do Cinema Novo*

I

By 1955–57, filmmaking in Latin America had suffered irreparable reverses. In Brazil, the bankruptcy of the Hollywood-modeled Vera Cruz studios in 1954 had proven that an industrial structure and capitalization were not sufficient to guarantee the development of a Brazilian cinema. From 1955 to 1957, production figures hovered between 25 and 36 films per year and consisted primarily of *chanchadas* made in Rio de Janeiro for domestic consumption.[1] In Argentina, the *coup d'état* that ousted Perón in 1954 also dismantled all state protection of the cinema and paralyzed an already waning industry. Although Argentine production had topped 50 films per year in the late 1940s and early 1950s, by 1957 annual production had dropped to 15 films. In Chile, the moribund state enterprise for the cinema, Chile Films, struggled for survival and only one or two na-

Radical History Review, no. 41, 1988, pp. 93–116. By permission of the publisher.

tional films were produced per year. In Cuba, a disastrous trend of Cuban-Mexican co-productions wound down and national production almost disappeared. Bolivia had never recovered from the advent of the sound cinema and had released no national films since 1938.

By 1968–69, although total production figures for most Latin American nations were not much greater, a tremendous difference in the nature of filmmaking and filmic reception was evident.[2] In Argentina, the efforts of Fernando Birri at the Documentary School of Santa Fe had challenged the otherwise prevalent industrial mode of filmmaking, and other radicalized young filmmakers had taken the cinema —conceived of as a tool for demystification and revolution—underground. In Brazil, the innovative Cinema Novo movement emerged from the ashes of the failed industrial efforts of Vera Cruz to revitalize the Brazilian cinema. In the decade following the triumph of the revolution in 1959, Cuba became the first Latin American nation where it was possible to construct a new cinematic culture on a national scale by reorganizing all aspects of the cinematic experience. In Chile, the national cinema was already synonymous with Popular Unity and the Allende political experiment.[3] In Bolivia, young filmmakers like Jorge Sanjinés challenged the hegemony of the state filmmaking apparatus and subverted its principles to produce a cinema for the majority Indian population of the nation.

In all Latin American nations, the 1960s were years of cultural and political effervescence, and the cinema—conceived of as an aesthetic, cultural, and political/ideological phenomenon—was self-consciously immersed in the maelstrom of popular and intellectual debates. In Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Cuba, and Bolivia cine clubs, film societies, film magazines, and museum exhibitions mobilized an active interest in national film culture and amateur filmmaking as committed activities. Throughout the continent—in nations as radically different as Argentina, Bolivia, and Cuba—the cinema's role in society and its relationship to the continent's struggle for liberation were redefined in the late 1950s and 1960s. By 1968 or 1969, the cinema of Latin America could rightly be called the New Latin American Cinema, a pan-Latin American cinematic movement dedicated to the people of the continent and their struggles for cultural, political, and economic autonomy.

By comparison to the standard or dominant cinematic movements and national cinemas, the New Latin American Cinema is peculiar: a marginal, politicized, often clandestine cinematic practice that has managed to give expression to new forms and contents; to create alternative modes of production, consumption, and reception; to produce great box office hits as well as utterly clandestine films; and, in short,

to change the social function of the cinema in Latin America. It is a challenge to scholars because it spans a somewhat nebulous 25- to 30-year period (from the late 1950s to the present), at least a dozen countries (which today include the Central American nations), and every genre or cinematic mode of production, while maintaining a tenacious, albeit often problematic, unity.

It is a "movement," but one much larger than any of the cinematic practices usually studied under this category, and one more unified than the international modernist or avant-garde cinemas. Unlike other "new cinema" postwar movements (such as Italian Neorealism, the French New Wave, the New German Cinema), its unity is not limited to the desire for nationalist expression and differentiation from the Hollywood "pleasure machine." Furthermore, the New Latin American Cinema is a political cinema committed to praxis and to the sociopolitical investigation and transformation of the underdevelopment that characterizes Latin America. It is thus one that cannot be properly understood in isolation from political, social, economic, cultural, and aesthetic forces.

The nature of the movement itself, then, demands that the analyst rethink the categories which are normally utilized to construct film historical discourses. Telling and analyzing the development of this movement entail much more than providing a list of "first films" and dates and identifying the "great men and women" and the "nations" behind them. If we cannot pin the movement down to a nation, to a hard-and-fast periodization, to the artistry of individual *auteurs*, or to a general dominant aesthetic, then we have to begin by investigating other alternatives for structuring history if it is going to explain as well as trace the specificity of this cinema.

In this essay, I will provide an analysis of the historical development of the New Latin American Cinema. My primary concern is to analyze the difficulties involved in the historical study of this cinema and my focus will be upon the complex network of determinants that catalyzed the movement's emergence and, later, its efforts to achieve pan-Latin American unity. In this process, I will also account for a number of specific problems related to the nature of the cinema in Latin America and its international position: the problems of influence, pan-Latin Americanism and nationalism, dependence and independence, "otherness" and cultural domination and hegemony. This essay addresses recent debates among Latin American filmmakers and among scholars of Latin American film that have questioned the status (and even the very existence) of the New Latin American Cinema. Questions such as "Is the New Latin American Cinema dead?" "Has it ever existed?" have echoed in places as disparate as the International

Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana (annually), the Edinburgh Film Festival (1985), the Second New Latin American Cinema Festival in Iowa (1986), and the pages of countless journals. Some have argued that the New Latin American Cinema as a movement is best defined in political terms: the movement coheres and exists because it is the cinematic elaboration of radical left aspirations for Latin America. As such, it represents a radical "break" from existing cinematic practices. Others have argued that the New Latin American Cinema is a "fiction" and that the national cinema movements that make up the New Latin American Cinema are far too disparate to be discussed as a coherent "movement." In this essay, although affirming the existence and continued political viability of the New Latin American Cinema, I present a different way of defining the movement that takes into account its historical evolution from and its transformation of national and international cinematic practices.

II

What is the New Latin American Cinema? The term represents an attempt to impose unity on a number of diverse cinematic practices; a political move to create an order out of disorder and to emphasize similarities rather than differences. It acquires its cultural and political currency retroactively, as it is used to redefine and value contestational cinematic movements that emerged independently in different countries. Unlike other "new" cinemas in Europe, the New Latin American Cinema is not traceable to a "miracle year" (like 1959 for the French New Wave) or to a single manifesto (like the Oberhausen document for the New German Cinema). It emerged slowly, its difference from other practices becoming gradually more pronounced, its goals coalescing throughout the 1960s and 70s. As terms go, it is a critical handle fraught with as many definitional inconsistencies as the French "New Wave" or the "New" German Cinema. But unlike these other critical categories which self-destructed as the different concerns of their practitioners became evident in their third and fourth films, the appropriateness and cultural currency of the term "New Latin American Cinema" has continued to grow, so much so that today the term seems to have become completely institutionalized. Fifteen years ago we could speak of a "Third Cinema," an "Imperfect Cinema" or a "Cinema of Hunger," but today these terms have become practically obsolete and are subsumed under the far more powerful and empowering "New Latin American Cinema."[4]

When the term is used today it always implies a socio-political attitude that constitutes the principal source of unity for these films and

practices. That attitude can be summarized as a desire to change the social function of the cinema, to transform the Latin American cinema into an instrument of change and of consciousness-raising or *concientización*. Always conceived of as a challenge to the hegemony of the Hollywood import and foreign control of cinematic institutions and as an active agent in the process of cultural decolonization, the New Latin American Cinema is not just a filmmaking movement; it is a social practice intimately related to other movements struggling for the socio-cultural, political, and economic autonomy of Latin America.[5] And it is a social practice that revels in the diversity and multiplicity of its efforts to create an "other" cinema with "other" social effects as a prerequisite of its principal goal to reveal and analyze the "reality," the underdevelopment and national characteristics, that decades of dependency have concealed.[6]

In the 1950s a confluence of factors gave rise to conditions that would set the stage for the emergence of the New Latin American Cinema as a movement. Politically, these were tempestuous years characterized by the rise of nationalism and militancy. Massive political changes took place throughout the continent: the *bogotazo* in Colombia in 1949, the unfinished workers' revolution in Bolivia in 1952, liberal reforms in Guatemala in 1954 which provoked U.S. intervention, the suicide of the populist Brazilian President Vargas in 1954, the military overthrow of Argentine President Perón in 1955, and, most significantly, the guerrilla war in Cuba which led to the establishment of a socialist regime in 1959. In the 1960s, the continued success of the Cuban revolution served as a central inspiration for social change and the rise of guerrilla and radical-left movements throughout the continent. With the mobilization of the middle classes in support of sweeping socio-political changes, this political turmoil was translated into a kind of cultural effervescence which, when linked to the traditionally *engagé* position of Latin American intellectuals and the growing student activism of the period, set the stage for broad cultural changes which decisively affected the cinema.

First of all, the context of filmic reception—of exhibition and consumption—began to change. The emergence of cine clubs, specialized film publications, film societies, and film festivals in the 1950s and early 1960s led to a different awareness of the cultural significance of the cinema. Although most of these organizations and activities were spurred by an interest in the burgeoning European art cinema, this interest served to shift attention away from the Hollywood model to alternative practices such as Italian Neorealism. In fact, in the context of production—the second realm to be considered here—Neorealism

was a revelation to those struggling to create national cinemas in the face of underdevelopment and the failures of industrial efforts.

In the classical sense of the term, Neorealism constituted an epistemological break for international filmmaking by representing the formerly unrepresented.[7] It explicitly rejected the Hollywood mode of production with its low budgets, non-actors and location shooting; demanded an awareness of the links between cinematic production and expression; and upheld, in Rossellini's words, "a moral position from which to look at the world."[8] And it was young Latin American filmmakers such as Fernando Birri in Argentina, Nelson Pereira dos Santos in Brazil, and Julio García Espinosa and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea in Cuba, who had either trained at the Centro Sperimentale di Roma—the birthplace of Neorealism—or who had been strongly influenced by the movement, who produced the films that are cited as the precursors of the New Latin American Cinema: Birri's *Tire Dié* (1956–60), dos Santos' *Rio Quarenta Graus* (1955) and Alea and Espinosa's *El Megano* (1954). Exhibiting a shared concern for representational authenticity and a rejection of the Hollywood mode of production in favor of more artisanal forms, these films were nevertheless part of national rather than pan-Latin American efforts to change the social position of the cinema.

III

How do these independent, nationalistic cinematic movements become the New Latin American Cinema? Two historiographical issues must be addressed before addressing this question: influence (and its relationship to cinemas striving for difference and "otherness") and nationalism.

Influence is generally thought of as the opposite of originality and difference, the most desirable traits for identifying the specificity of cinematic practices. The film historian/critic always struggles to establish the difference between the object of study and other practices.[9] To a large extent, film scholarship's fascination with the identification of oppositional film practices—be they the film noir, the women's film, the structural avant garde, or the New Latin American Cinema—must be seen as an effect of our interest in discontinuity as a progressive strategy that can be contrasted to an assumed standard, fixed, and continuous history or institution—specifically, the Hollywood cinema. In the context of the New Latin American Cinema, our contemporary interest in difference, when combined with this cinema's own discursive reinforcement of its status as an "other" and the critics' own political commitment, has led many to overlook the essential function of influences in the process of forging a New Latin American Cinema from disparate and geographically distant national cinemas. And yet one of the most telling and defining characteristics of that cinema has been its ability to transform and improvise upon existing models of cinematic production.

Although distinct in style, function and motivation from the European movements, the strong national cinemas of Brazil, Argentina and Cuba in the early '60s were indeed developed in the context of the cinematic innovations that had emerged from Europe and in the context of each nation's unique cinematic histories.[10] Their "otherness" is predicated on their inseparability from and their relationship to the dominant, for it is in the nature of cultural production in dependent nations always to be caught in a struggle for self-definition.[11] Thus when we look at the influence of Neorealism—or the French New Wave or the Soviet cinema—on the development of the New Latin American Cinema, it is not to deny that cinema originality, otherness, or a political viability that is specific to its relationship with Latin American social structures, but to claim for that cinema a special status as a particular kind of transformational practice.

The issue of nationalism and the New Latin American Cinema is related to the question of influences. In fact, if it were not for the phenomenon of influence, the New Latin American Cinema could not possibly be thought of as a movement, for it is the reciprocal and collaborative influences among different national (and nationalistic) movements that gives rise to this cinema. It is particularly important, for example, to consider the influence of Cuba and the Cuban cinema on the development of the New Latin American Cinema as a movement.

The concept of a national cinema has been much discussed in Latin America, even though few of these nations have been able to establish national cinematic industries. The cinema as a national necessity has never been a concern of Hollywood, even though classic Hollywood films may indeed turn on the screw of national identity, as Philip Rosen has recently argued.[12] But in Latin America, the importance of nationality in the cinema has been a hotly debated issue almost since the birth of the cinema.[13] In the face of what has always been perceived as the dominating and stifling presence of other cultures and ideologies, the cinema was identified early on as a crucial site for the utopian assertion of a collective unity identified as the nation.

The New Latin American Cinema fits in with national cinema projects because the issue of how to define, construct, and popularize national cinemas has always been one of its primary concerns. Although it has not always been discussed as such, the New Latin American

Cinema posits the cinema as a response to and an activator of a different kind of nationhood or subject position of nationality than the one sponsored by dominant cultural forces. The goal has been to develop through the cinema (and other cultural practices) a different kind of national and hemispheric consciousness by systematically attempting to transform the function of the national cinema in society and the place of the spectator in the national cinema. As Cuban filmmaker/theorist Tomás Gutiérrez Alea has argued, the goal is to promote a spectator that "ceases to be a spectator in the real world and that confronts reality not as a given but as a process in which one can have an active role."[14] The films of the New Latin American Cinema, ranging from documentaries like *Por Primera Vez* (*For the First Time*, 1967, Cuba, Octavio Cortazar), *La Hora de los Hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968, Argentina, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino), and *La Batalla de Chile* (*The Battle of Chile*, 1973–78, Chile, Patricio Guzmán and the Equipo Tercer Año collective) to fiction films such as *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*, 1968, Cuba, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea), *El Chacal de Nahueltoro* (*The Jackal of Nahueltoro*, 1968–9, Chile, Miguel Littín) and *El Coraje del Pueblo* (*The Courage of the People*, Bolivia, 1971) consistently complicate the protocols necessary for their reception, mixing documentary and fictional modes of representation in order to alter the signifying work of the cinema and thereby engage their audiences at different levels.[15]

A different concept of nationalism and nationhood in the cinema lies at the heart of the New Latin American Cinema's attempts to change the social function of the cinema in Latin America. The processes whereby national cinemas begin to exhibit and/or articulate the principles of the New Latin American Cinema are complex and dependent upon mutually determining relationships among a series of socio-political, cultural, and cinematic changes. I shall briefly outline some of these changing relationships in Argentina as an illustration of the mechanics of the process of redefining the desire for a national cinema—a process that was also taking place in Brazil and in Cuba (albeit for different reasons and taking different forms in each country).

IV

Although the Argentine cinema already had a long history before World War II, the national industry was unable to recover from a crippling war-time decline even under the protectionist policies of the populist government of Juan Perón.[16] The Cinema Law of 1957—also known as the Decreto Ley 62-57 and in force until 1973—did not serve as a stimulus for the industrial development of the national cinema, but it had one positive side-effect. By providing as much as 50 per cent of the production costs of national productions, it allowed directors to become their own producers and stimulated a series of independent productions that seemed to change the physiognomy of the Argentine cinema by reintroducing national characters.[17] Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, for example, managed to set up his own production company (Producciones Angel), to retain complete artistic/financial control of his films, and to become the first European-style, self-expressive *auteur* of the Argentine cinema. At the other end of the spectrum, filmmaker/producer Fernando Ayala, took the cinema on as a medium for social criticism and analysis by adapting films from contemporary critical-realist Argentine literature and bringing to the screen topics that had previously been considered taboo.

Stimulated by the intellectualized cinema of Torre Nilsson and provoked by the social criticism of Ayala, young *cine-clubistas* took advantage of the general industrial decline to apply for state-guaranteed production loans and to debut their first features in 1959–1961. The principal filmmakers that emerged in this period were Simon Feldman, José A. Martínez Suárez, Manuel Antín, David José Kohon, Rodolfo Kuhn, and Lautaro Murúa. With the exception of Murúa, these young cineastes adopted the cinema as a vehicle of personal expression. Sharing the spirit of the "Young Turks" of the *Nouvelle Vague* in France, their films were narratively experimental, personal, and cosmopolitan and exploited the streets of Buenos Aires as locales for almost autobiographical self-expression.[18]

Although the *Nueva Ola* coheres as the product of a specific Argentine historical conjuncture (delimited by the political optimism of the middle classes under President Frondizi, the state's film subsidy program, and the growth of cinema culture), it is not a traditional cinematic movement that exhibits many similarities in styles and/or themes. Rather, the coherence of the *Nueva Ola* lies primarily in its class positions and ambivalences, for it was (with the possible exception of Murúa) an intellectualized cinema designed for a small, elitist, Buenos Aires audience and its major achievement was to bring to the screen and assert, with the technical fluidity of the European cinema, the world-view and individualistic experiences of the Buenos Aires middle-class.

Although deeply influential, the *Nueva Ola* was not able to transform the Argentine cinema or to become *the* Argentine cinema. From an economic perspective, the *Nueva Ola* was not a commercial success in Argentina and Argentina's position in the international market

precluded the extensive exportation of most of its films. Politically, the overthrow of President Frondizi in 1963, the factionalized military government of 1962–63, and the ineffectual civilian rule of President Illia from 1962 until 1966, also crippled the burgeoning movement (and the hopes of the bourgeoisie). Although the *Nueva Ola* was formally and thematically innovative, it did not attempt to change the economic base of film production, distribution, and exhibition and was, therefore, unable to survive the constraints of a small and closed market struggling to generate profits. Furthermore, its thematic concerns—inscribed within the cosmopolitan, middle-class problematic of Buenos Aires—failed to generate a national character/identification that was appealing to the majority of the primarily working-class Argentine film-going public.

However, in the margins of the *Nueva Ola*, another group was experimenting with a different kind of filmmaking at the Instituto Cinematográfico and the Documentary Film School of the Universidad del Litoral in the province of Santa Fe. Here, Fernando Birri, a graduate of the Centro Sperimentale in Rome, proposed that what Argentina needed was not a "new" cinema, but a new *Argentine* cinema:

> It's a matter of a national *toma de conciencia* [consciousness raising], of a take-over of our country. This is what I propose to the Argentines: that they occupy Argentina, that they capture her spiritually and materially. . . . I am not interested in proposing an aesthetic defense of reality and/or realism. What interests me is that the cinema be good for something, and for that something to be of help in constructing our reality.[19]

Against the blandness of the commercial cinema and the elitism of the *Nueva Ola*, Birri proposed a popular cinema that would document previously unrepresented aspects of national reality and that could be accepted by larger segments of the population; a cinema which addressed the non-elites of Argentina. This cinema was not to be based on autobiography, intuition, or lived experience, but on the systematic observation and study of the phenomenon being filmed. What Birri called for as a "national" cinema was a realist cinema with social commitments and aspirations. Although neither Birri nor the Instituto were highly productive in absolute terms, their work reverberated deeply within Argentina and, later, throughout all of Latin America.[20]

Although these cinematic activities and experiments in Argentina are articulated exclusively within the national sphere and are not yet linked to a New Latin American Cinema movement, they serve as an example of the transformations of "nationalism" and "national" cinema that were necessary for the development of that pan-Latin American consciousness. Similar transformations were taking place in this period in Cuba and in Brazil. Both the Cinema Novo movement and the Cuban revolutionary cinema emerge as efforts to affirm a different kind of national consciousness and to redefine the role of the national cinema in society.

The national is the turning point of these cinematic discourses in Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba and of the New Latin American Cinema as a whole, but the movement is also related to the national at another, more complex, level. Even though global capitalism is often identified with economic internationalization and the need to transform all the citizens of the world into equal consumers of manufactured goods, we must be careful not to assume that any textual, historical, or intertextual expression of nationalism in the cinema constitutes a rejection of that capitalist domination.[21]

Capitalism is also a system based on the commodification and isolation of all experience, on the breakdown of experience into discrete (and marketable) units among which we must certainly include the creation and maintenance of underdeveloped nations serving the purposes of this system. Furthermore, dependence operates through internal as well as external forces and the national (or, as it is commonly called in this instance, bourgeois nationalism) may be articulated in the service of those same forces of international capitalism. It is precisely as a movement that stresses a particular set of nationalist positions and that articulates these positions across a terrain much broader than the national sphere that the New Latin American Cinema acquires its revolutionary cultural significance. It does not just represent a national cultural response to the specific forces of development and underdevelopment of a particular nation state, but an attempt to incorporate the importance of the national within the necessarily pan-Latin American nature of any such class-cultural struggle.

In order to outline the development of the New Latin American Cinema, it is necessary to analyze the process whereby a number of national cinemas throughout the continent coalesced into the New Latin American Cinema. How does the Latin Americanism of the New Latin American Cinema emerge? In what contexts? Given what incentives or motivations? How is it fostered and preserved?

V

Having established their own identity against the commercial products that preceded them, against the Hollywood cinema, and in relation to the more progressive strands of the European cinema, the national

movements of Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba began to turn towards the Latin American continent and, finally, began to take notice of each other. This is not to imply that the *cinemanovistas* in Brazil, the *nuevaolistas* and Fernando Birri in Argentina, and the filmmakers of the ICAIC (the Instituto Cubano de Arte y Industria Cinematográficos) in Cuba did not know of one another's existence prior to the mid-1960s. But until the early 1960s there had been few systematic efforts to establish cinematic exchanges and, most importantly, the filmmakers themselves had not begun to think of their work in relation to other Latin American filmmaking, nor had they begun to conceive of their overall cultural projects as exceeding the limits of their national borders. This cinematic isolation was as marked in Brazil and Argentina as it was in Cuba, where the ICAIC devoted most of its energies to producing a didactic national cinema first (primarily documentaries) with scarce resources and experienced personnel.[22] When the process of cinematic exchange began, it slowly changed the nature of the cinema that was produced in each country. It was no longer just a question of provoking a national *toma de conciencia* of underdevelopment through the critical realism of an engaged *auteur*: that *toma de conciencia* became more and more a Latin American priority that included the national but sought to be of Latin American consequence as well. The individual projects and goals of national cinemas always remained distinct and clearly identifiable. But the national became contextualized and articulated in relation to a "popular" and a "political" that exceeded the boundaries of exclusively national concerns and increasingly became Latin American.

The first articulations of the New Latin American Cinema project took place as a result of a series of international meetings that began in the early 1960s. Films from a number of Latin American nations had participated in the major international film festivals (Cannes, Venice, etc.), but few countries had been simultaneously represented at any one festival and, most significantly, there had been little discussion of the specific problems of the cinema in Latin America. Film festivals held in Latin America itself had, until the 1960s, been devoted to the European art cinema rather than regional productions. Although Uruguay's Festival Internacional de Cine Documental Y Experimental (International Documentary and Experimental Film Festival) sponsored by SODRE (the Radio-Electric Broadcasting Society) had already served as an important forum for Latin American films, its emphasis on the documentary had somewhat limited the scope of its influence.

It must be noted, however, that the 1958 SODRE festival, featuring British documentary filmmaker John Grierson as guest of honor and

the photo-reportage work of Fernando Birri and the Documentary School of Santa Fe, was an important precursor for the New Latin American Cinema because the first pan-Latin American association of film producers and directors (PRIDAL—Productores y Realizadores Independientes de America Latina) was created there as an outcome of discussions among filmmakers. Albeit short-lived, this organization pioneered by calling for increased cooperation and collaboration among independent Latin American filmmakers (and included among its members, filmmakers Nelson Pereira dos Santos [Brazil], Patricio Kaulen [Bolivia], Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, and Simon Feldman [Argentina]).[23]

However, the first sustained encounters between diverse Latin American filmmakers took place on foreign soil, in a series of festivals sponsored in Italy by a Jesuit cultural group dedicated to strengthening the relationship between the "New" and "Old" worlds. At the third of these events, the 1962 Festival of Latin American Cinema in Sestri Levante, a large and diverse group of film directors, critics, and producers (including Alfredo Guevara [Cuba], Rodolfo Kohn [Argentina], Glauber Rocha, and Walter da Silveira [Brazil]) were able to meet and discuss the future of the cinema in Latin America and the collective responsibilities and goals of each nation, filmmaker, and critic. In the resolutions drawn up at this meeting, following a panel discussion chaired by Edgar Morin and entitled "The Cinema as an Expression of Latin American Reality," the participants agreed to "condemn the cultural and cinematic isolation provoked by the foreign control of film production and exhibition" and to work to establish a base for collaboration among the different Latin American national cinemas and cultures.[24] This Sestri Levante festival thus served to situate the filmmaking projects and problems of individual nations in the context of the entire hemisphere and it furthermore allowed for important contacts to be established among filmmakers working in markedly different national cinematic conjunctures.[25]

Two years after the impetus of Sestri Levante, the Cine Club of Uruguay sponsored a festival featuring the independent cinemas of the Southern Cone countries, but the Latin American spirit was not officially reinvoked as such until the 1967 Viña del Mar Festival and the first "Encuentro de Cineastas Latinoamericanos" (Meeting of Latin American Filmmakers). The activities of this festival, although sponsored by a small society of amateur filmmakers and originally designed to increase tourism to this resort area of Chile, were to resonate for the next decade as the events that provided the impetus for the New Latin American Cinema movement.

By the 1967 Festival, the promise of Sestri Levante had already begun to be realized: there were already a considerable number of Latin American films to watch, discuss, and attempt to distribute. It had become apparent that filmmakers could indeed begin to talk about a "New Latin American Cinema" that exceeded the boundaries of each individual nation and coalesced as a larger and far more powerful entity. Furthermore, the films that could be shown already exceeded the products of "national" movements (in Cuba, Brazil, and Argentina) and included the works of filmmakers working in relative isolation in countries as diverse as Uruguay and Bolivia (respectively represented by Mario Handler's *Carlos* [1965] and Jorge Sanjinés' *Revolución* [1964]).

The Viña festival also provided the stimulus for the creation of a Latin American Center for New Cinema and the Cinemateca del Tercer Mundo in Montevideo. Although short-lived, the Center and the Cinemateca played a crucial role in the development of alternative distribution systems and of closer working relationships among Latin American filmmakers through pioneering collaborations, cross-national exchanges, experiments with alternative exhibition strategies, and—in 1969—the publication of a journal—*Cine del Tercer Mundo*—emphasizing Latin American Oppositional filmmaking rather than a single national cinema.

In 1967, *Cine Cubano* published a report of this first meeting of Latin American filmmakers which proclaimed a new solidarity and the "birth" of the New Latin American Cinema:

> Despite the diversity of its creators, its nationalities, and its modes of expression, there exists in Latin America a cinema strongly opposed to the denaturalizing marks of yankee imperialism and its Latin American branches. This is a cinema that is strongly tied to the aspirations and needs of its people, a cinema that has offered a number of proofs of its very serious professional and artistic commitments.[26]

Recognizing the importance of this first meeting of Latin American filmmakers, the Cubans heralded it as a "first step" in the collaborative process of creating a cinema for Latin American liberation. And in fact, what was perceived as the most important effect of the Viña meeting was its demonstration of the unity of purpose of the New Latin American Cinema.[27]

This unity of purpose was again displayed at the 1968 Second Meeting of Latin American filmmakers which took place in Mérida (Venezuela), under the auspices of the Centro de Cine Documental at

the Universidad de los Andes, alongside the first Muestra de Cine Documental Latinoamericano. Some of the most influential films of what was already recognized as the New Latin American Cinema were screened at this festival: Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's *La Hora de los Hornos* (1968, Argentina), Mario Handler's *Me Gustan los Estudiantes* (1968, Uruguay), Marta Rodríguez and Jorge Silva's *Chircales* (1968, Colombia), and Octavio Cortázar's *Por Primera Vez* (1967, Cuba).

Different avenues for film practices, different alternatives for a cinema of and against underdevelopment within the New Latin American Cinema were already established and would be further developed. From fiction to documentary, from shorts to feature-length films, from clandestine productions to the products of an already established industry—all these options were exercised, debated, and evaluated in the context of the cinematic/cultural/political needs of individual nations and in the context of the New Latin American Cinema's project for Latin American solidarity and liberation. In the resolutions drawn up at this meeting, the following definition of the movement was proposed:

> A cinema committed to national reality; a cinema which rejects all evasive and deformative formulas and indifference and ignorance, in order to confront the problematic of the sociological, political, economic, and cultural processes which each country, according to its particular situation and characteristics, is living through; a cinema which creates works permeated by realism, whether they be fictional or documentary, simple testimonies, profound analyses, or agitational tools. A cinema born in impossible conditions, because of the infinite passion of its authors, as an act of faith. An act of faith that must not only overcome material problems of production, but which must also struggle against problems of interpretation, the comprehension of new contents, and the formal elaborations of those contents. A cinema that even when produced encounters another obstacle: finding new and appropriate distribution/exhibition channels so that the films can be seen and truly accomplish their objectives.[28]

At this and the several meetings that were held in subsequent years (Viña del Mar in 1969, Mérida in 1970 and 1977, Caracas in 1971 and 1974) the different projects of the New Latin American Cinema were consolidated and implemented and the movement and its practitioners gained strength and solidarity. From this point on, it was no longer a question of working to establish a New Latin American Cinema, for that cinema was already "un acto irreversible," an irreversible

fact of history, as Julio García Espinosa would later herald at the opening of the IV International Festival of the New Latin American Cinema in Havana (1982).[29]

VI

In the period 1968 to 1973 it was fairly easy to discern what was and what was not part of this cinematic movement. The films of the New Latin American Cinema were revolutionary, explicitly political, called for an end to underdevelopment, poverty, oppression, hunger, exploitation, illiteracy, and ignorance. Many, like the powerful Argentine film-essay *The Hour of the Furnaces*, took on the medium as an explicit political instrument, and insisted that the cinema should and could be used as a "gun" in the struggle for the political and economic independence of Latin America (for example, the films of Mario Handler in Uruguay or of Santiago Alvarez in Cuba).

Others, in the fictional domain, took on the cinema as a vehicle for entertainment, but transformed and demystified its standard parameters: *Lucia* (1969, Cuba, Humberto Solas), *La Tierra Prometida* (*The Promised Land*, 1973–4, Chile, Miguel Littín), *Antonio das Mortes* (1968, Brazil, Glauber Rocha). They were films which showed Latin Americans the faces of their peoples and the problems of their nations, that celebrated national characteristics and popular culture, that sought to contribute to the end of all the shared ills of the continent. They were realist, historical, inventive films that took up the margins of traditional filmic practices as their own terrain, that subverted and deconstructed the traditional distinctions and categories of the dominant cinema to tell "other" stories, to show "other" facts. From the documentaries' explicit call to arms to the fiction films' analysis and rediscovery of national history, the films of the New Latin American Cinema asserted a utopian dream of continental collectivity, the dream of José Martí's "Nuestra America" in cinematic form.

In less hyperbolic terms, it is perhaps simpler to identify the New Latin American Cinema by clarifying what it did not include. With the exception of Cuban films, in this period the New Latin American Cinema did not include industrial films, or any film that relied on the structures and strategies of the dominant sector in their production methods, aesthetics, distribution, or in their relationship to audiences. These were independent films, marginal cinemas on the fringes of existing industries (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico) or artisanal practices in nations without a developed national cinematic infrastructure (Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, etc).

Cuba was and is a case apart. At the time the only socialist nation of Latin America, its films have always been seen as contributing to the New Latin American Cinema project. In fact, the Cubans have been instrumental in promoting the idea and—through extensive collaborative arrangements—the very existence of the New Latin American Cinema project. The role Cuba has played in fostering the New Latin American Cinema has yet to be fully detailed: a listing of coproductions and Latin American exhibitions and distribution agreements is not enough to explain the influential role of the ICAIC and the Cuban Revolution itself throughout the continent. For example, in the 1980s, the annual International Festival of New Latin American Cinema has become a mecca for Latin American filmmakers, producers, and distributors who travel to Havana to simultaneously engage in film "business" and theoretical seminars. However, what must be clarified is that the New Latin American Cinema is far from being simply a Cuban "construct." The desire for this cinema—exemplified in the Cinema Novo and in the Nueva Ola, for example—both predates and exceeds the boundaries of Cuba's influence and the national priorities of its own cinema.

It is important to emphasize the impossibility and the obdurate continued viability of the New Latin American Cinema project in the late 1970s and '80s. In this period, Latin America was beset by a wave of repressive regimes, military *coups d'état*, failed socialist experiments and revolutionary efforts, ballooning foreign debts, and worsening economic conditions. Military coups (in, for example, Chile [1973], Uruguay [1973], and Argentina [1976]) and long-term repressive military regimes destabilized the New Latin American Cinema project within many nations. In the early 1980s, the social promise of the 1960s seemed to exist only in the ashes of revolutionary efforts to change the continental order of things. The New Latin American Cinema, often forced into exile or silenced by censorship and repression at a national level, assumed an increasingly pan-Latin American character, as is well evidenced by the Chilean and Argentine cinemas in exile.

But the New Latin American Cinema was simultaneously challenged by another problem. From a practical standpoint, the New Latin American Cinema project seems antithetical to the industrialization of cinematic production.[30] A cinema designed to subvert, demystify, and challenge the dominant cinema, common-sensical developmental assumptions, and political givens is marginal almost by definition and not particularly concerned with commercial imperatives. However, a desire for a different kind of industrialization of the cin-

ema has also been a constant concern of the New Latin American Cinema.

To make the national cinema strong, to encourage sustained production, to maintain and raise popular interest in the cinema: these are all concerns of the New Latin American Cinema that cannot be addressed from the margins, but that demand discussion in the context of mainstream national cinematic production, state protection of the national cinema, and that cinema's commercial or popular potential. Thus, in those nations with a developed (or developing) cinematic infrastructure, the New Latin American Cinema, in its search for ways to become a popular cinema, gradually found itself incorporated into mainstream—albeit somewhat modified—commercial operations. When combined with political pressures, this trend towards industrial practices altered the nature of the New Latin American Cinema project. So, for example, in Brazil, we must take into account the hegemonic power of the state organism for the cinema, Embrafilme; in Argentina, the recent redemocratization has also made possible the growth of the industrial filmmaking sector and the production of a number of significant and very successful films; and in Cuba, although still a case apart, the longevity of ICAIC as the state apparatus for the cinema has also meant that the Cuban cinema is an official (rather than a marginal) cinema with rather different national imperatives.

Today it is no longer as easy to distinguish what is and what is not part of the New Latin American Cinema project as it was in 1968. On the one hand, the ideals and practices of the New Latin American Cinema have become the norm for the continent. Even filmmakers working within different national industrial sectors have a different consciousness of their potential social effect and political goals and exhibit their concerns according to the options available in their specific political-social conjunctures. But on the other hand, there are constant claims (from within, but especially from outside the movement) that, in fact, the New Latin American Cinema is finished; that its specificity has disappeared; or, as Chilean filmmaker Patricio Guzmán claimed at a round table discussion at the Havana Festival of 1980, that it repeats itself, with the implication that it has ceased to have a special utility or serve a social function:

> It seems that we are still operating based on the premises of the sixties even though we are entering the decade of the eighties. In certain ways, some of our works are twenty years too late.[31]

However, the changes in the New Latin American Cinema since 1968 have, indeed, been significant: the range of options had grown,

the range of social functions this cinema has been asked to play has changed. Here we must consider the important differences between a cinema of resistance in exile (Chile), an official cinema in Cuba, a revolution-in-transition cinema in Nicaragua, a cinema struggling for a revolution in Salvador, a proto-industrial cinema in Argentina and Brazil. We must also consider that as a result of improved pan-Latin American relations (in the cinematic realm), co-productions are increasingly common. Co-productions provide the financial resources necessary for larger scale productions, but they also make the definition of the "nationality" of many films problematic. (For example, Chilean director Miguel Littín's *Alsino y el Condor* [1983] was shot in Nicaragua with the full co-operation of the state film organism [INCINE], with funding and technical assistance from Mexico, Costa Rica, and Cuba.) Furthermore, the introduction of video has increased access to the media and, as a result, in many nations video production has taken over the oppositional spaces occupied by the cinema in the early 1960s.

If, indeed, the New Latin America Cinema "repeats itself," then we must analyze the terms of those repetitions. Does it repeat itself thematically, stylistically, in its calls for specific kinds of actions, in its forms of expression, in its commitments? Some of these "repetitions," would seem to be unavoidable for a committed cinema, others questionable. But wholesale assertions of a lack of accomplishment in the New Latin American Cinema must be challenged with the continued growth of filmmaking throughout the continent, with the continued collaborative ventures among Latin American filmmakers and producers, with the increasing importance of the Havana Film Festival as the number of participating nations and films increases annually, with the efforts of the Committee of Latin American filmmakers and the recently formed Foundation of Latin American Filmmakers and Third World Film School (located in Cuba) to continue developing and fostering the future of a popular cinema of and for Latin America.

In light of these transformations, to claim that the New Latin American Cinema is dead—a corollary of the claim that it repeats itself—is to deny the movement the ability to adapt to changing conditions. The New Latin American Cinema is, for the most part, no longer necessarily a marginal cinema. But this does not mean that it has given up its politics. Rather than proclaim its death, what seems more appropriate is to call for an analysis of how it has changed, for close studies of its expressive and social strategies and commitments.

Notes

Research for this essay was made possible, in part, by research grants from the Mellon Foundation and the Roger Stone Thayer Center for Latin American Studies at Tulane University and the kindness of the staff of the Cuban cinematheque in Havana.

1. *Chanchadas* are light musical comedies, a unique Brazilian film genre, that were the mainstay of Rio de Janiero producers between 1940 and 1960. For more information about Brazilian film production in this period, see Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, eds., *Brazilian Cinema* (East Brunswick NJ, 1982).

2. Argentina, 40 feature films for 1968 and 41 for 1969; Brazil, 54 for 1968 and 53 for 1969; Chile, 5 each year; Cuba, 3 each year; and Bolivia, none in 1968 and 2 in 1969. See Jorge A. Schnitman, *Film Industries in Latin America: Dependency and Development* (Norwood, NJ, 1984) for data for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Bolivia; and Arturo Agramonte, *Cronologia del Cine Cubano* (Havana, 1966) for Cuban data.

3. Although Salvador Allende did not become president of Chile until 1970, when his *Unidad Popular* coalition won the national elections, Allende and his political platform had long been a factor in Chilean political life. In fact, in 1958 Allende and the FRAP party had almost won the national elections.

4. "Third Cinema" was the term used by Argentine radical filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino to distinguish their cinematic practice from the "first cinema" (industrial filmmaking) and the "second cinema" (*auteurist* cinema privileging the director). See their *Cine, cultura y descolonización* (Buenos Aires, 1973). The term "Imperfect Cinema" was coined by Cuban filmmaker-theorist Julio García Espinosa as part of an argument proposing that technical "perfection" need not be the central preoccupation of Latin American filmmakers. See his *Por un cine imperfecto* (Caracas, 1973). Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha is responsible for proposing the term "cinema of hunger" to describe what the films of Latin America should emphasize: the continent's underdevelopment and its metaphoric and real "hungers." See his "An Esthetic of Hunger" reprinted in translation in Johnson and Stam, *Brazilian Cinema*, 68–71.

5. The names and films that could be cited here are too numerous, although special mention must be made of individuals like Humberto Mauro in Brazil; "El Nego" Ferreyra and Mario Soffici in Argentina; Enrique Díaz Quezada in Cuba; Luis Castillo in Bolivia; El "Indio" Fernández in Mexico; and Pedro Sienna and Salvador Giambastini in Chile.

6. It is important to note that the struggle against dependency in Latin America—in the cinematic realm as well as in other areas—has always had two fronts: first, the struggle against external control, domination, and influence; second, the struggle against the internal forces that ally themselves—consciously or not—with foreign interests.

7. As Robert Kolker argues in his *The Altering Eye* (New York, 1983).

8. Maurice Scherer and Francois Truffaut, "Entretien avec Roberto Rossellini," *Cahiers du Cinema* 37 (July, 1954), cited by David Overby, "Introduction," *Springtime in Italy* (Handem, Conn., 1978), 1.

9. Influenced by contemporary crisis thought in theory (the theoretical tendency that—stemming from Foucault, Althusser and others—searches for and valorizes gaps, breaks, and discontinuities in order to reject the linearity and teleology of traditional continuous histories), film scholarship of the last decades has often seemed to project into the film practices that constitute its "object" its own theoretical and practical desires.

10. For a detailed analysis of this process, see my *The New Latin American Cinema*, forthcoming, University of Illinois Press.

11. I am referring here to the debate among Julianne Burton, Teshome Gabriel, and others in the pages of *Screen*, Nos. 3/4 (1985) and No. 1 (1986). The debate centered on the relationship between "first world" theory and criticism and "third world" cinema. Although both sides emphasized the need to preserve the "otherness" of third-world cinema, one side argued for the impossibility of doing this without theory while the other focused on the inappropriateness of the theoretical structures of the developed world for this object of study.

12. Philip Rosen, "Securing the Historical: Historiography and the Classical Cinema," *Cinema Histories, Cinema Practices* (Los Angeles, 1984), 17–34.

13. See my "A Short History of Latin American Film Histories," *University Film and Video Association Journal* 37, No. 1 (1985), 55–69. The importance of the issue of the national in cinema discourses in Brazil has been traced by Maria Rita Galvao and Jean-Claude Bernardet, *Cinema: Repercussoes em caixa de eco ideologica (As ideias de "nacional" e "popular" no pensamento cinematografico brasileiro)* (Sao Paulo, 1983).

14. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *Dialectica del Espectador* (Havana, 1972), 57.

15. See my "At the Limits of Documentary: Textual Transformation and the New Latin American Cinema," in Julianne Burton, ed., *Documentary Strategies: Society/Ideology/History in Latin American Documentaries, 1950–1985*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990, 403–32.

16. The reasons for the collapse of the Argentine industry during World War II are too complex to elaborate fully here. Suffice it to say that Argentina's "neutrality" during the war and its subsequent trade problems, coupled with an internal lack of direction and weak capitalization, brought the once-successful industry to an almost complete standstill. For further data see Domingo di Núbila, *Historia del Cine Argentino* (Buenos Aires, 1959) and Schnitman, *Film Industries in Latin America*.

17. The most notable directors who became producers were Leopoldo Torre Nilsson and Fernando Ayala. For further details, see my "Unleashing the Margins: Argentine Cinema, 1956–1976," in John King, ed., *Dossier: Argentine Cinema*, forthcoming by the National Film Theater and the British Film Institute.

18. Among the *Nueva Ola* films premiered in 1959–61 were: Simón Feldman's *El Negoción* (1959) and *Los de la Mesa 10* (1960); José Martínez Suárez's *El Crack* (1960) and *Dar la Cara* (1962); Manuel Antín's *Carta a Mamá* (1961) and *La Cifra Impar* (1961); David José Kohon's *Prisioneros de una Noche* (1960) and *Tres Veces Ana* (1961); and, *Los Jovenes Viejos* (1961) and *Los Inconstantes* (1962). Less interested in exploring the cosmopolitanism of Buenos Aires, Lautaro Murúa's first two films, *Shunko* (1960) and *Alias Gardelito* (1961), almost constituted a "rural" cinema because of their focus on the underprivileged rather than the privileged living within Buenos Aires itself.

19. Fernando Birri, "Nace una experiencia cinematográfica," *La Escuela Documental de Santa Fe* (Santa Fe, 1964), 17.

20. Of the Instituto's projects, the best known are the mid-length social documentary *Tire Dié* and the feature-length "fiction" *Los Inundados*. However, Birri's theoretical and political propositions are so consonant with what was being expressed in other parts of Latin America that he is often referred to as the "father" of the New Latin American cinema.

21. See, for example, Armand Mattelart's discussion in his "Introduction," *Communication and Class Struggle: 1. Capitalism, Imperialism* (New York, 1979), 57–70.

22. For a detailed history of the development of the ICAIC and the Cuban revolutionary cinema, see Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1986).

23. See Julianne Burton, "Cinema," *Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. 4, 1987.

24. "III Exposición de Cine Latinamericano," *Cine Cubano* 7, (1963), 2.

25. Additional information about the Sestri Levante festival was obtained from Leonel Magin Hinojosa, "La Crisis: Componente Inseparable de la Vida; Entrevista con Manuel Pérez Paredes," *Cine Cubano* 100 (1981), 29–45 and from texts of the festival proceedings in the archives of the Cinemateca de Cuba, Havana, Cuba.

26. "Viña del Mar y el Nuevo Cine Latinamericano," *Cine Cubano* 42–43–44 (1967), 3.

27. See, "Extractos de una Entrevista con Alfredo Guevara Publicada en Bohemia 31 Marzo 1967," *Cine Cubano* 42–43–44 (1967), 147.

28. "Editorial: El Desafío del Neuvo Cine," *Cine al Día* 6 (1968), 2.

29. Julio García Espinosa, "Somos un Acto Irreversible," *Cine Cubano* 105 (1983), 3.

30. Cinematic industrialization entails not only extensive capitalization and production on a grand scale, but also the establishmment of distribution and exhibition circuits through which to reach the mass audience necessary to recoup costs and generate profits. Above all, an industrialized cinema is a mainstream cinema, that is, a cinema that is part and parcel of a society's dominant ideology and not one that can easily subvert and/or demystify that society's givens.

31. Patricio Guzmán, "Cine Latinoamericano: Exilio, crisis y futuro," *Cine Cubano* 99 (1981).

Film Artisans and Film Industries in Latin America, 1956–1980

Theoretical and Critical Implications of Variations in Modes of Filmic Production and Consumption

Julianne Burton

Foreword

A decade ago, when the quest for "revolutionary" cinema was at its height and the theorists' call for a "materialist" cinema at its most insistent, a French film journal of some prominence on the left declared that bourgeois cinema would never be genuinely threatened "until films are produced which say everything about themselves: their economy and their means of production."[1]

Part I of the monumental documentary trilogy, *The Battle of Chile* (1975–1979), ends with scenes from the abortive military coup of June 1973, "dress rehearsal" for September's successful takeover. Along the streets of downtown Santiago, incongruously, people run in the direction of the camera, scrambling for shelter. Searching beyond them, the lens locates and zooms in on a tank surrounded by military personnel—a surreal object on that all-too-ordinary streetcorner. One soldier, pistol in hand, looks directly at the camera for an instant, raises his gun, turns away, then abruptly turns back again, arm extended. The image wavers, seems to lose its axis and, after a momentary vertiginous blur, goes blank. The cameraman has apparently filmed his own summary execution at the hands of the Chilean armed forces.

What image could say more about itself and its "means of production" than that its recording cost the recorder his life? Yet to recog-

Working Papers, No. 102. Latin American Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C., 1981, pp.1–25. By permission of the publisher.

Part 4
New Latin American Cinema Revisited

An/Other View of New Latin American Cinema

B. Ruby Rich

Everyday events proceed now in another way. The image of revolution has become ordinary, familiar. In some ways we're achieving transformations even more profound than earlier ones, but ones that aren't so "apparent" now, not immediately visible to the observer. (. . .) Thus we find it no longer sufficient just to take cameras out in the street and capture fragments of that reality. (. . .) The filmmaker is immersed in a complex milieu, the profound significance of which does not lie on the surface.

Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *The Viewer's Dialectic*[1]

The critics of our movement see it with eyes that do not comprehend what is going on in our movement. Anything that doesn't correspond to the old formulas, they don't recognize as being genuine New Latin American Cinema. In other words, they're trying to impose a model on us which is alien.

Ruy Guerra & Fernando Birri, Park City, Utah, 1989[2]

I

The films and filmmakers of the New Latin American Cinema movement have in recent years become the victim of a stereotype, in that the entire history of New Latin American Cinema has come to be judged by the yardstick of its early classics—as though history were

IRIS, no. 13, 1991, pp. 5–27. By permission of the author.

static, as though the relationship of aesthetics to politics, once fixed, must remain in that same equation forever. Because Latin American cinema was able to penetrate North American and European consciousness and markets with its own particular style and set of concerns, the terms of that debut have continued to set the standard governing the interpretation of all the work that has followed.

In fact, the 1980s have seen a profound transformation of that history and a marked change in what the "new" New Latin American Cinema may be seen to represent, in the people who are creating it, and in the context within which its works are now being produced and exhibited.[3] Of course, history has never really been a matter of linear progress marching ever more efficiently and homogenously toward the horizon. There are refinements, reversals, denials, rebellions, leaps forward, regressions, revivals, and wholly new developments that appear to hold no echo of the past whatsoever.

Before assessing the present, a return to the past is in order. The New Latin American Cinema had a beginning far more complex than usually acknowledged and a development that has in fact been less hegemonic than perceived. The starting point is the 1950s, the post-World War II moment in our global cultural history. It is in part an anti-hegemonic moment, in that it signified a rupture both with previous balances of power and with previous modes of representation in cinema (with causes at once economic, philosophical, political, and technological). At the very least, it predated the U.S. global ascendancy that would last for some 30 years, right up to the 1980s. Significantly, this post-war period gave rise, in Italy, to neo-realism, which would cross over to Latin America in three steps.

The first crossing was made from Europe to Mexico, when Luis Buñuel went there to live and work, and ended up making, among other films, *Los olvidados*. Given its emphasis on the dispossessed, the "real" life of the Third World, on pictures not pretty enough to have made it into the movies before and a camera style fluid enough to match, the film is a portent of things to come. But Buñuel wasn't Mexican. Despite the shared language between Mexico and Spain, Buñuel's film was not aimed at evolving a national identity or a Latin American aesthetic. It was, however, a forceful announcement, in 1950, that neo-realism had arrived (though Buñuel, of course, was himself pre-neo-realist in his aesthetic strategies) and could have a role to play in Latin American cinema.

The second crossing was a roundtrip. During 1952–55, four young Latin Americans travelled to Italy to study at the legendary Centro Sperimentale (Center for Experimental Cinematography) at the University of Rome: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Fernando Birri, Julio García Espinosa, and Gabriel García Márquez. When Birri returned to Argentina, he founded the Film School of Santa Fe, now legendary for the generation of filmmakers he trained there. When Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Julio García Espinosa returned to Cuba, they collaborated on *El megano*. This first work of the new Cuban cinema was completed in 1954 and banned by Batista. In the insurgency period, Espinosa became the head of "Cine rebelde."[4] Both thus became key participants in the fashioning of a cinema that would attempt to fuse new subjects with new forms and in so doing set a standard for the New Latin American Cinema movement. Though Gabriel García Márquez, the would-be screenwriter, first turned to literature, in the past few years he has become a singular influence upon Latin American filmmaking: through his role as head of the FNCL (New Latin American Cinema Foundation) which oversees the film school established in 1986 in Cuba to train young filmmakers; through the screen adaptations of his writings and his own screenplays; and, in 1987, through the screenplays for the *Amores difíciles* series of six co-productions with Latin American or Spanish filmmakers for Spanish television, all based on García Márquez stories or ideas.

Finally, the third step illustrates that the influence of Italian neo-realism was not limited to those who physically journeyed to the mecca of Rome to study with its masters. Nelson Pereira dos Santos, back in Brazil, was part of a circle that recognized the import of this aesthetic and political strategy for Brazilian cinema. This circle was stimulated by the arrival of Alberto Cavalcanti, who exposed the young cinephiles to neo-realist cinema. Pereira dos Santos's first short film, *Juventude*, was made at the same time as Buñuel's Mexican debut (produced for the Brazilian Communist Party, it was lost when sent to a European festival) and his first feature, *Rio 40 Degrees*, built on the neo-realist example to become the founding work of *cinema novo* in 1955. Pereira dos Santos recalls:

> Without neorealism, we would have never started, and I think no country with a weak film economy could have made self-portraying films, were it not for that precedent.[5]

The influence of Italian neo-realism coincided with political shifts in Latin America: then, as now, aesthetics and politics could not be sequestered into separate arenas. In Brazil, Pereira dos Santos's stance was part of a larger position articulated through two key film industry conferences (of 1952 and 1953). The growth of a cinema defined by its national position, in turn, was made possible by the nationalistic government of Getúlio Vargas (1937–45 and 1951–54), nurtured by

the atmosphere of increasing democratization under the elected government of Juscelino Kubitschek in 1955, and stunted by the military coup that overthrew João Goulart in 1964.[6] Then, the coup within a coup of 1968 greatly eroded the cultural zones of tolerance, and led to the emphasis in Brazilian cinema of this period upon metaphor and symbolic allusion. The establishment of Embrafilme in Brazil in 1969, ironically, provided an ambiguous freedom of expression for filmmakers during the years of military rule: Embrafilme itself was notable for its lack of censorship, but the produced films were frequently censored by the government.[7]

The political stage was never incidental. Fernando Birri could return to Argentina in 1956 because of the ouster of Perón; the film school which he established upon his return could flourish in part due to the democratic Frondizi government (which fell in 1962, the beginning of Birri's long exile).

Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's *La hora de los hornos* has been long acknowledged for its cinematic rupture of the preexisting spectator/film relationship. Less acknowledged has been the explicit political agenda that led to the creation of the third part of the trilogy (so clearly peronist that it was largely omitted from screening after Perón's disastrous return to power in 1973) or to Getino's service as head of the film censorship board under Perón.

In Cuba, extraordinary films could be made not simply because of a particularly inspired generation, but because of the massive change in social, economic, political, and—yes—aesthetic relations caused by the Revolution in 1959. Because of the promising conjunctural relations (and of the new cinema that might be created within a revolutionary context) Fidel Castro's government, as one of its first official acts, founded ICAIC, the Cuban Film Institute. It is no coincidence that *La batalla de Chile* was shot during the period of Allende's presidency in Chile (though finished, of course, tragically, after), nor that Allende's brief term as president coincided with a film renaissance in Chile as filmmakers sought to implement the ideals of his government at an aesthetic level. After the coup of September 11, 1973, the military immediately destroyed the university's film equipment and banned all the films made by Chile Films in the preceding three years.[8]

In sum, the emergence of the New Latin American Cinema cannot be separated from the political events during the period of its "uneven development" in the distinct regions that make up Latin America, nor can its different direction today be separated from the political circumstances of our decade.[9] For a (North American and European) critical perspective that tends always toward some form of auteurism,

toward a celebration of individualism and heroic genius, the fundamentally political preconditions of cinematic achievement in Latin America may seem beside the point. But they have been very much the point throughout the history of the New Latin American Cinema movement, and continue to be today. Just as Latin American culture is a nexus between nationalism and regional coherence, and the New Latin American Cinema a crossroads of aesthetic innovation and ideological motivation, so too have politically-committed filmmakers positioned themselves between individualism and identification with the popular sectors.

II

The early years of the New Latin American Cinema were characterized by a neo-realist style adapted to meet Latin American needs and realities. Objecting to the long-dominant Hollywood style of studio shooting and seamlessly composed narratives, the artists of the New Latin American Cinema immersed themselves in the opposite. Freeing the camera from its confinement and isolation, the eye of this political movement roamed the streets. Instead of the customary replication of the Hollywood studio system, nonprofessional actors replaced the stars. The preoccupations of a leisure class, and the presentation of a sanitized history, were replaced by the here-and-now, historical reclamations, the lives of a class that had not seen itself reflected in the cinema. It was an oppositional cinema at every level, self-consciously searching out new forms for the new sentiments of a Latin American reality just being recovered. It was a cinema dedicated to decolonialization, at every level including, frequently, that of cinematic language. A cinema of necessity, it was different things in different countries: in Cuba, an "imperfect cinema"; in Brazil, an "aesthetics of hunger"; in Argentina, a "third cinema."

As the films appeared on U.S. and European screens, their image was imprinted on the critics who, just discovering Latin American cinema, would name them classics. Even in the beginning, however, the New Latin American Cinema was more complex than such a unilateral model would indicate. In Brazil, for example, the eloquent grittiness of the neo-realist cinema was paralleled by the baroque mysticism of Glauber Rocha (to take just one example). In Cuba, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea was to make *Memorias de subdesarrollo*, but he had also made *Las doce sillas*, a madcap comedy, six years earlier. Only one year after *La hora de los hornos* was made in Argentina, Brazilian director Joaquim Pedro de Andrade made *Macunaíma*, a film which drew on a Brazilian visionary Modernist novel to create a

film that was anti-rational, anarchistic, and fantastical in its mix of folkloric and pop-culture iconography.

Were this not enough, consider the example of Fernando Birri. For years, the legendary film *Tire dié* was considered the prime example of the New Latin American Cinema movement due to its unprecedented portrayal of marginal life among the trash-pickers of Santa Fe and the boys who ran along the train trestles, risking or suffering an early death for a few pennies tossed by wealthier travellers from the comfort of their railroad cars. Birri's reputation and the birthright of New Latin American Cinema rested on this work. Shortly after making *Tire dié*, however, Birri made another film: *Los inundados*.[10] The railroad motif reappears, inverted, because this time around Birri made a comedy—a comedy about the homeless and dispossessed. *Los inundados* is important because it establishes an initial parallel development internal to New Latin American Cinema that would be unacknowledged in the First World reception to the movement's new film strategies and aesthetic evolutions. It testifies to the *joie de vivre* of a cinematic movement that became more acceptable (perhaps more marketable) when it could be packaged as the testimony of victims or the exoticism of underdevelopment.

III

Suggesting a redefinition of appropriate subject and style for the New Latin American Cinema of today, Latin American filmmakers rightly contend that "there is no aesthetics without politics." I would argue that the reverse is also true: each political moment demands a specific aesthetic strategy. The 1980s have been very different from the 1960s, and so are the films. Current concerns and strategies are visible in a trio of key films from the past (specifically *La negra Angustias* from Mexico in 1949, *Los inundados* from Argentina in 1962, and *De cierta manera* from Cuba in 1974). Each film was an anomaly, particularly since two of the filmmakers were women, a startling amendment to the virtually all-male pantheon of the New Latin American Cinema. Clearly, the project of this article is the construction of a revisionist history.

In 1949, the Mexican director Matilde Landeta made her second feature film, *La negra Angustias*.[11] This was a contradictory period for women in Mexico: the Cárdenas presidency (1934–1940) was a time of immense progressive movement, land reform, an opening up of society—and the denial of the vote to women, due to Cárdenas' fear that women would represent a reactionary force and vote against him. It would be 1953 before women obtained the right to vote in Mexico.[12]

Landeta created a film in which the daughter of a famous revolutionary is ostracized for her refusal to marry and her insistence on maintaining her manly *marimacho* attributes long past adolescence. After the death of her father, she becomes a revolutionary in her own right. Yet the film turns the codes of revolutionary cinema upside down: the scenes of heroic action turn out not to fit so naturally with a woman protagonist, and the true passion and drama of the film increasingly occur, not between revolutionary fighters and a corrupt government, but in the battles between men and women.

The film's most notable battle occurs in two parts: a would-be rapist's assault on Angustias, and her later revenge when she captures him and has him castrated (off-screen). The greatest struggle takes place, not on a battlefield, but on the field of emotions, as Angustias struggles to differentiate her role as a woman from that of a leader of men, and seeks to find a way out of the trap in which her purportedly female heart has landed her. Thus, the film's dramatic line is drawn consistently along the ground of sexuality, as Angustias seeks over and over to reconcile competing gender identities and demands.

Apart from its prescient attention to race and gender, roles and contradictions, *La negra Angustias* is unusual for its ending, which leaves Angustias strong, active, and fighting still after her momentary surrender to the subjugation of romantic love. In an era when Mexican cinema routinely relegated women to positions of subservience—if not throughout the film, then certainly in its final scenes—this was a radical break. If, as Jean Franco has suggested, films such as these (made by El Indio Fernández, et al) were key to a national agenda for a family model within which women were subservient, then Landeta's film has a landmark political importance. She laid the groundwork for the Latin American women's films of the 1980s, which began to incorporate women's struggles for identity and autonomy as a necessary part of a truly contemporary New Latin American Cinema.

In Argentina in 1962, when Fernando Birri was installed in what was in retrospect a temporary bastion, his film school of Santa Fe, he conceived *Los inundados*, mentioned above. The film's most striking feature is Birri's insistence on joy, his emphasis on the vital subjectivities that characterized the squatter colony and the family's buoyant responses to its sequence of reversals. Equally important is the film's creation of particularized characters who do not so much as stand in for "types," let alone archetypes, but rather, manifest marked identities, an expansion of individualism rather than a denial of it. With this film, Birri shifted the terms in which the downtrodden of society had been viewed, exchanging the singular term of "the people" for the third-person plural, persons, so seldom used rhetorically. In this sense,

Birri created the preconditions necessary for the attention to subjectivity characteristic of the New Latin American Cinema of the 1980s.

Moving as did Birri from documentary to fiction, but in quite a different context, Cuban director Sara Gómez made *De cierta manera* in 1974 (due to her death during post-production and damage to the negative, the film wasn't released until 1978).[13] The film makes its points formally and ideologically, using documentary and fiction against each other, interrupting its own melodrama to insert an intertitle introducing "a real person in this movie" or intercutting a social worker's smug summations with documentary footage to delegitimate her. Its story of a love affair between Yolanda and Mario becomes the story of the couple's sociocultural formations and deformations in terms of the differences between the bourgeois class and marginal class, blacks and whites, men and women, official prescriptions and subcultural traditions—a story, in short, of unresolved contradictions. In the end, Yolanda must learn how to deal respectfully with the children and mothers in the "marginal" neighborhood where she's teaching, while Mario must decide whether to expose an unregenerate friend who has cut out of his factory job to shack up with a girlfriend, claiming to be at his mother's hospital bedside.

Long exemplary for its formal innovations, *De cierta manera* becomes important, in the context of this overall history, for its challenge—posed in both psychological and experiential terms—to ideological and sociological assumptions. Gómez systematically refutes Revolutionary platitudes and politically-correct analyses in favor of depicting the full scope of life in the black and "lumpen" neighborhoods she knew so well. Virtually the only woman ever to direct a feature film in Cuba, she offers clear critiques of machismo and the consequences of male pride.

Combining humor with documentary-like exposé, Gómez repeats Birri's achievement in claiming the strengths of both. Focusing on both race and gender, she follows Landeta's success in initiating a narrative examination of both. Perhaps *De cierta manera*, in its assessment of problems neither caused by nor cured by the Revolution, but fast becoming endemic to its existence, is the first "post-Revolutionary" Cuban film. In this sense, it demonstrates an early awareness of a potential disjunction between the portrayal of the individual and that of society, with an influential demonstration that new aesthetic alternatives would have to be investigated for this trajectory to continue.

All three films—*La negra Angustias, Los inundados, De cierta manera*—share a refusal to attribute "otherness" to subjects formerly marked as such, accompanied by a commitment to the narrative inscription of an "other" selfhood, identity, and subjectivity. In this sense, all three share a contemporaneity with our current concerns that lift them even further out of the historical moment of their making, in which, at any rate, they were so anomalous, each in its own very different national and historical context.

If the period of the early New Latin American Cinema movement was strongly identified with the reclaiming of the dispossessed and with the portrayal of the sweep of history, in both ideological and folkloric terms—and if exceptions to this tendency, like the three mentioned here, were either written out of the histories or perceived as solitary exceptions—then it is fitting that the current phase of the New Latin American Cinema should follow the lead of these films, turning away from the epic toward the chronicle, a record of a time in which no spectacular events occur but in which the extraordinary nature of the everyday is allowed to surface. Its films mark a shift from "exteriority" to "interiority." In place of the explicitly and predictably political, at the level of labor or agrarian struggles or mass mobilization, we often find an attention to the implicitly political, at the level of banality, fantasy, and desire, and a corresponding shift in aesthetic strategies. Such a shift has also, not coincidentally, opened up the field to women.

The move from exteriority to interiority holds implications for our sense of individualism and collectivity. The new films advance a reclaiming of the individual (which can hold either progressive or reactionary consequences, as the very concept and practice of individualism carries the potential for either direction). In today's New Latin American Cinema, the old phrase "the personal is political" can almost be heard, murmuring below the surface. Its expression, however, is not a privatized one at all but very much social, political, public.

The films of the New Latin American Cinema of the 1980s are engaged in the creation, in cinematic terms, of what I would term a "collective subjectivity." They are concerned, nearly obsessed, with a new form of looking inward that offers the possibility of a radical break with the past, with an approach that can put on the screen, now for the first time, the interior world of persons whose lives first reached these same screens, in their stage of struggle, more than thirty years ago.

And the reasons for such a redirection? Just as the earlier development of the movement had its roots in the political climates of the distinct nation-states that pass for a single entity under the misleading term of Latin America, and which do nevertheless have a common unity in spite of their different cultures and histories, so too do the films of the 1980s reflect the political circumstances of the continent

at the time of their making. The early 1980s were a time of sweeping change for a number of Latin American countries. In Cuba, the Mariel exodus led to changes and reassessments. In Argentina, the defeat of the military in the Malvinas led to an end of military rule and a new elected government. In Brazil, the military surrendered power through a national process instituting a constitutional government. In Uruguay, too, the years of dictatorship came to an end. And in Venezuela, the end of the oil boom shifted society from largesse to shortfall.

To be sure, the democracies that have superceded military rule in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay may well be pseudo-democracies, unstable and vulnerable to both military and economic pressures. Many in the hemisphere are rightly suspicious of the U.S. agenda behind the election panacea. Even more to the point, the crisis in Latin America today is more apt to center on the economic than the governmental, as the foreign debt becomes a sinister updated name for imperialism. Even so, the 1980s were indisputably different from the 1960s, and filmmakers—even those veterans who continued to work and produce films throughout this brief history of the New Latin American Cinema—demonstrated in their narrative strategies that they knew the difference.

IV

> When a dictatorship falls, the people become great devourers of culture. They need to exorcise the horror.
>
> Beatriz Guido[14]

As political frameworks change, from anti-fascist to post-fascist, for example, an oppositional cinema inherits the same obligation to change as do the oppositional parties in the electoral sector. In this new environment, a cinema which turns inward and which begins to enable viewers to construct an alternate relationship—not only with their government but with an authentic sense of self—is an indispensable element in the evolution of a new sociopolitical environment. Slogans, pamphlets, and organizing have been key to political change: character, identity, empathy, and, most importantly, a sense of personal agency, now are of equal importance to political evolution.

It could perhaps be argued that the democratic (or pseudo-democratic) process has itself become the foremost aesthetic influence on contemporary New Latin American Cinema, given its shift in emphasis from the "revolutionary" to the "revelatory." Just as oppositional political action demanded one kind of cinema, so does the individual's open participation in a newly-legitimatized form of government demand another. To quote a young Brazilian critic, Joao Carlos Velho, from the *Jornal do Brasil:* the "aesthetics of hunger" of *cinema novo* has given way to a "hunger for aesthetics."[15] Similarly, an Argentine actress at the women's symposium of the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana in 1986 told of the explosion of new body workshops and body-therapy classes then taking place, as people tried to discharge the years of repression literally, physically, from their bodies. In this same period, an article appeared in the *New York Times* detailing the therapy methods being employed to ease the pain of the children of the disappeared, concluding that the most effective therapeutic intervention thus far had been the coming of democracy, because it allowed the telling of secrets necessary to drain the political—and emotional—wounds.

The telling of secrets is an important theme in recent works of the New Latin American Cinema. In Argentina in 1987, the young filmmaker Carlos Echeverría used the documentary form to try to dig up secrets that were no longer welcome in a society more intent on creating a picture of so-called normalization. His *Juan: Como si nada hubiera sucedido* set out to investigate the case of one disappeared youth. In the film, a young radio journalist, alter ego to the disappeared youth, fronts for the filmmaker as they journey through Argentine society like the most dogged of detectives, interviewing on camera all the surviving principals of the original scenario. The film's grim lesson is that secrets are only liberating to the extent that they imply some action, to the extent that they are examined and not just buried once again. In this film, however, there is no happy ending, no "truth" to be uncovered, only a persistent trail of deception and subterfuge leading up to the *punto final* ruling that ensured future immunity for the military.

Similarly, Eduardo Coutinho's *Twenty Years After* (*Cabra Marcado Para morrer,* 1984) could not function without the telling of a major secret: the identity of a legendary figure in the history of labor struggles (the widow of a martyred union leader who has been in hiding under an assumed identity for twenty years), whom Coutinho and his camera crew track down. Coutinho pushes his unearthing of secrets from the publically political to the familial, finally tracking down her children and investigating the emotional consequences of the military repression that fractured the family. The film was the hit of the first Rio film festival in 1984, and was awarded a standing ovation just at the moment of the transition to democracy. Significantly, Coutinho makes the telling of private secrets as important as the public ones and, in so doing, reflects the increased emphasis on the personal

that is so central a feature of the current wave of New Latin American Cinema.

Raúl Tosso's *Gerónima* mixes documentary with fiction to expose another kind of secret: the survival of Indians despite the official proclamation in Argentina of their extinction. By describing in visceral detail the incarceration and interrogation of Gerónima and her children in a hospital for the singular sin of living a non-assimilationist life marked by Indian customs, Tosso makes his point that ethnocide is as bad as genocide. He inscribes the private as a sphere of struggle, particularly since all that is meant by "cultural" is sequestered within the unstable receptacle of individual identity. The point is made particularly chilling by two aspects of the film: first, the role of Gerónima Sande is played by an actress who is herself a member and activist of the same tribe (the Mapuches) to which Gerónima belonged: and second, the soundtrack is composed predominantly of Gerónima's voice, taped during her interrogation sessions by the hospital personnel. Here, then, psychic alienation is equated with, and leads to, death.

The uncovering of secrets in these films is one aspect of the move toward "interiority," but it is carried further away from the concrete and into the imaginary by the fiction films of the decade. In the recent Busi Cortés feature, *El secreto de Romelia*, the secret turns out to be a quintessentially feminine one: virginity itself. Based on a Rosario Castelanos story, the film charts the costly collision (for the woman, of course) between the cult of female virginity and the cult of male honor. Cortés demonstrates to what extent women filmmakers can rework/imagine even the classic scenarios of family, purity, and revenge.

It is in the arena of fiction that the influence of women directors and feminist ideas regarding behavior, gesture, and pacing, is most pronounced. Interiority in this sense is not a retreat from society, but an altered formal engagement. New social orders mandate a narrative cinema that constructs a new spectator, both through deploying processes of identification and through the structuring of new formal strategies; while the first has been more widespread than the second, both may be found represented in the New Latin American Cinema of the 1980s.

From this perspective, Suzana Amaral's *Hora da estrela* is a key work (see the interview with Amaral by the editor in volume 2). Her subject may be classically oppositional (story of a downtrodden Northeasterner who comes to the big city and has the life smashed out of her) but her treatment owes nothing to historical or sociological perspectives:

> What's important is what's behind people, the interior life (. . .) The facts may be important, but what's more important is what's behind the facts. (. . .) My film shows that poor people also have fantasies, that they, too, dream and want to be stars.[16]

Her central character in the film, Macabea, is a regendered update and revision of the above-mentioned *Macunaíma:* her inchoate self becomes both a metaphor and a concrete representation of Brazil. For Macabea isn't just an anti-hero, she's virtually an anti-character in a film that Amaral has termed "anti-melodrama." Macabea has a terrible job that she performs terribly; marginal or exploitative relationships with her co-workers, roommates, and boyfriend; a terror, awe, attraction and repulsion of/to men; and a fearsome faith in the detritus of modern consumer culture.

Amaral explicitly critiques the role of mass culture in the lives of the disenfranchised, showing, for example, the rush of Macabea and her roommates to watch the daily *telenovela* through the window of a neighbor's adjoining apartment. Similarly, she represents the reality of lumpen consciousness through its mass-media determinant: Radio Reloj, a station that constantly broadcasts meaningless information which Macabea, its devoted listener, repeats throughout the film. Amaral uses the film's ending (Macabea's hallucination of herself at the moment of her death—as a *telenovela* heroine) to summarize the effects of underdevelopment, neocolonialism, and the mass media. Macabea embraces this pop-culture fantasy as her last will and desire, but because of its very origins, such a fantasy can be nothing other than obscene . . . and fatal.

One scene in the film signifies most unambiguously the distance travelled emotionally and ideologically from the early years to the present: it is the one in which Macabea orchestrates a moment alone in her room, illicitly, during the day. Locking herself in, she turns up her beloved radio, swings the sheet off her bed, and begins to dance around the room. It is her first moment of solitude, probably unlikely to recur for a hundred years, and it's represented with all the desperate urgency of a commodity. It is also Macabea's first moment of experiencing the self, the person who had never had the luxury of taking shape before. In her alternation between feeling and seeing (herself in the mirror), listening and luxuriating, she presents the audience with a scene of victory every bit as glorious, as liberating in its implications, as heroic in its triumph, as those reflected in the films of the 1960s. This moment of self-identification and self-definition, in a space that feels at first like a vacuum for its removal from the domain of pseudo-information that has permeated Macabea's environment, is emblematic

of the new cinematic direction that is becoming so marked, yet still so unremarked by First World critics or audiences.

Other films made by Latin American women directors in the 1980s further strengthen the case for seeing emotional life as a site of struggle and identity equal to those more traditional sites by which the New Latin American Cinema was once, and continues to be, defined. Tizuka Yamasaki is an interesting case in point, for her *Patriamada* (1985) tries mixing documentary with fiction to get at the emotions behind events.[17] Filming at the time that all of Brazil was debating its transition to a civilian government, Yamasaki took three actors along on all her shoots of mass public events and historic meetings, and managed to insert her own melodrama into the proceedings. Her film, which illustrates just how contradictory the codes of fiction and documentary can be from one another, insists upon the equality of private and public, man and woman, the sexual and the political. Taking this insistence to the extreme, the film posits the planning of a baby and the planning of a government as mutually metaphoric.

Thus, it may be no accident that Maria Luisa Bemberg was filming *Camila* as democracy came to Argentina in mid-shoot. *Camila* pointedly redefined the site of political struggle as the sexual, in her interpretation of the famous story of an aristocratic young woman and a priest, whose love affair presented the ultimate challenge to the repressive patriarchalism of their day and whose ultimate murder proved the equation between sexuality and liberation inherent in the narrative. By seeing the sexual struggle as one on an equal plane with other kinds of ideological struggle, Bemberg was able to include women in the ranks of heroes and freedom-fighters without falling prey to the contradictions with which the character of Angustias, years earlier, in Mexico, had to contend. In this case, the radical shift in the area of inquiry was not accompanied by a parallel formal shift but rather by a dedication to creating seamless art cinema (lush, transparent, and perfect periodicity) in the service of a new idea.

Similarly, Bemberg's *Miss Mary* (1986) situated rebellion in the realm of sexuality, both for the children of the aristocrats that a governess (played by Julie Christie) is brought to oversee and for the repressed British governess herself. The plot concerns the self-realization of the governess and the coming of age of her charges, set within the world of wealthy Anglophile Argentines on the eve of World War II. The elaboration of the girls' sexual identity and the patriarchal modes of its repression are explicitly made parallel to the rise of peronism by Bemberg's intercutting of archival footage in the midst of otherwise flawless art-direction. For Bemberg, women are the

lynchpin in the ongoing battle between repression and liberation, a battle which she views atomistically as launched inside the family to explode throughout society. In this film, then, menstruation is trauma, sexual acts involve psychic risk, and peronism is built in the bedrooms of the nation.

In Mexico at a time when there was as yet no sign on the horizon of any fracture in the endless fortification of PRI, the party seemingly sworn to rule the country forever, Paul Leduc fractured cinematic traditions with *Frida* (1985). The film emerged from this very traditional national filmmaking tradition to call into question its comfortable assumptions, both cinematic and ideological. Leduc's film was inspired by the life of Frida Kahlo, an artist whose reputation today is an accurate index of the difference made by recent feminist scholarship and the reevaluation of art-history hierarchies. This difference, precisely that between the public and private, parallels exactly the shift being described herein from the early days of the New Latin American Cinema movement to the present and is echoed interestingly by Leduc's own evolution from the public canvas of *Reed: México insurgente* (1971) to the private one of *Frida*.

Frida Kahlo is now known for a variety of reasons: revered painter, wife of Diego Rivera, victim of physical disabilities caused by accident, intimate of Leon Trotsky, supporter of the Communist Party, wearer of Indian costume, collector of folk art, lover of her own sex. Leduc chose to eschew none of this and to subordinate no one part to the demands of the other. He followed the lead taken by so many historians of submerged "others" and relied, not on the obfuscating texts but, rather, on what he termed "the history of gossip" to compose the details of her life. Even more radically, he chose to reprise Kahlo's commitment to the visual, basing his film in image, color, gesture, and sensuality instead of the relentless dialogue more common to Mexican cinema.

Probably the most formally daring of the recent films here enumerated, *Frida* as a project carries a particular ideological importance as well. Kahlo's paintings were long ignored or undervalued precisely because they represented woman, the body, a gendered pain, a psychic split. At a time when politically-correct art pictured workers (not braces or babies) and when the acceptable scale was massive and public (that is, murals) not small and enclosed, the paintings of Frida Kahlo were doomed to be dismissed as an eccentric avocation, the irrelevant pastime of an otherwise politically-committed person who, alas, was born female. Given the evolution from exteriority to interiority that this article seeks to describe, Paul Leduc could hardly have

chosen a more relevant subject. He is aware of the implications of his choice: "Frida was closed up in her body, in her house, in her studio. In the midst of all these *noises* of her time (the politics, the demonstrations, in which she also took part), there was her expressive silence. Of images."[18] By according Frida Kahlo's journey inward a place in history equal to that of John Reed's journey outward, Leduc cast his hat into the ring of a bold revisionism committed to replacing the epic with the chronicle and to synthesizing a new sense of pleasure with the pain that has been present all along.

Jorge Toledo's *Vera*, made in Brazil later (1987) in the democratization process than Bemberg's films, fits well onto the trajectory pioneered by Leduc since it carries the examination of sexual identity as political act even further. Taking as its starting point the release of a young woman from an orphanage/reform school, Toledo's film traces Vera's life backwards and forwards as she attempts to unravel her particular riddle of gender and reinvent herself, literally, as a man. Her ambition survives the sadistic prison administrator's attempt to humiliate her and her kind: "I'm concerned about this butch-girl business. . . . Okay, you're so butch, let's see your pricks." He tries to topple the standards by setting up dances with a brother institution, importing real boys to dance with the femmes. Meanwhile, the girls discuss among themselves the ambiguity of life outside the joint, where guaranteed butch-girls have been known to get knocked up.

In her total isolation, self-invention, alienation, and hopelessness, the character of Vera (based in part upon an actual woman who came out of a similar joint, wrote poetry and the story of her life, and killed herself) has much in common with the everywoman figure of Macabea. Taking anti-hero as heroine, Toledo anchors his tragedy in the details of gender identity and sexual structuring. It is a drama that is specifically, achingly, female. It is a drama that is concerned most fundamentally, not with action, but with language itself: at the keyboard of the word processor, Vera meets a defeat as total as she met in the bed. Yet, nonetheless, Toledo never quite abandons metaphor, the possibility that Vera represents not only a woman, not exactly a lesbian, not just a woman who wants to be a man, but perhaps Brazil itself—the country that emerged so recently from prison, unsure of its identity, formed and deformed by its captivity, cast so adrift in the land of object-choice that its own desires are opaque, unspoken, transgressive but unattainable. *Vera* orchestrates its erotic tension so successfully that finally the struggle for gender definition seems to the viewer as worthy of respect as any other fight in the Latin American struggle for self-determination.

V

> We fought for the people to have a right to education, a right to housing, a right to food, but forgot that people also have el derecho a la alegria, the right to joy.
>
> Ruy Guerra[19]

If Paul Leduc can be seen to have made a film that is nearly the opposite of the one that first established him in the canon of the New Latin American Cinema, how much more so Fernando E. Solanas, *auteur* of the classic of Third World revolutionary theory, *La hora de los hornos*, who went on to make, of all things, musicals: *Tangos: El exilio de Gardel* (1985) and the recent *Sur* (1987). In *Sur*, as in Toledo's film, prison plays a central role. This time, however, in a thematic strategy that would seem to invert Solanas' early tenets, he posits as the central drama not the released man's political re-engagement but how and whether he'll be able to reclaim his emotional life by forgiving his wife her infidelity during his years in jail. It is the private life which is assigned priority; now the emotions demand as much commitment, engagement, and action, as events did a few decades earlier.

Solanas thus takes the notion of interiority and transforms it into an aesthetic. The urban landscape of Buenos Aires is made artificial, its streets a cityscape of the soul, a theatrical space in which memories and longings can be enacted. The film's drama is an interior one made exterior, as the protagonist passes his long first night of freedom debating the figures of his imagination on street corners suffused with the mysterious smoke and fog of memory.

After years of exile, Solanas was able to return at last to Argentina to continue his filmmaking. Back at the time of *La hora de los hornos*, it would have been the spirit of Che or Perón that presided over Argentina. Now, with *Sur*, it is the spirit of Carlos Gardel—redolent of nostalgia, romance, feeling—that Solanas chooses to enshrine. The time in jail was matched to the political activity that preceded it: the future is tied to acts of emotional restoration that can activate the feelings shut down during years of military rule.

Ruy Guerra, the Brazilian director who like Solanas is identified with the early golden age of New Latin American Cinema and in his case specifically the foundations of *cinema novo*, also returned from long exile to make a musical. His *Opera do Malandro* mixes romance and rebellion, this time in the unlikely setting of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, rescripted for the underworld of Rio on the eve of World War II and rescored by Chico Buarque. Ruy Guerra defends his move from post-neo-realism to musical: "opera is a political form." The late Manuel Octavio Gómez would agree. His penultimate film, and Cuba's

first musical, *Patakín*, paid homage to the subcultural powers of *santería* with ritual characters who acted out the oldest struggles of all: man versus woman, good versus bad, industry versus sloth, all coded to signify commentary on the state of the Cuban revolution in the 1980s.

The contemporary search for the meaning of pleasure and the pleasure of meaning in a post-fascist or post-revolutionary or post-economic boom society reaches a suggestive apotheosis in *Best Wishes*, a recent film by Brazilian director Teresa Trautman. Here, numerous themes already activated by other Latin American directors take an even more surprising form than the recycling of the musical: melodrama, nearly soap opera, reclaimed. Like many of her fellow filmmakers, Trautman concerns herself with the telling of secrets, the breaking of prohibition, the speaking of the unspeakable. Like fellow Brazilian Toledo, she situates sexual construction at the center of political life.

Best Wishes takes a formulaic pace and structure—an aristocratic family gathering at its summer estate for one last weekend before mother sells it off, complete with a long cathartic night in which secrets are revealed and couples realigned—and sneaks ideological meaning into the mix. She makes explicit her insistence upon challenging the old order of political priorities with a new gender agenda which combines a transgressively female comic sense with an epiphanic revelation that disrupts the previous patriarchal order. The film's central family is dedicated to the memory of its favorite son, a *desaparecido* who vanished during the years of military rule. When the daughter of the lifelong family groundskeeper, drunk and panicked over where she and her aged father and adolescent daughter will live after this last night, finally reveals the identity of her daughter's father —he turns out to be this very same beloved son, who had raped her, those many years ago. This is dangerous stuff, mixing political messages into the genre of sex comedy, but it suggests how far the New Latin American Cinema has come in reconsidering its own issues and history from new perspectives.

Certainly the presence of women directors where almost none had ever tread is a factor in this reconsideration. If *Best Wishes* took the figure of the *desaparecido* and insisted on a revision of his idealization from a gendered perspective, then a recent dramatic documentary can be seen to take a related step—the gendering of assassination and torture, through the testimony of women survivors.

In *Que Bom Te Ver Viva* (1989), Brazilian director Lúcia Murat focuses upon a figure that must itself embody a contradiction in the Latin American context: the figure (in the sense of the representative as well as the body itself) of the woman guerilla fighter who survives

martyrdom to speak.[20] And speak she does, as the director interviews a number of women, former militants in the armed struggle against the military dictatorship, who'd been captured, jailed, tortured, and managed to survive "without going crazy." The documentary mixes direct interview footage, usually conducted on videotape, with footage of the women contextualized within their daily lives, older footage of their lives in the period of the dictatorship (sometimes limited to newspaper headlines of their capture), home movies of one of the women in jail, and the women's reflections both on that period and on contemporary attitudes toward them in post-military Brazil.

Ironically, this explicit attempt to write gender into the survival narratives is the one that fails: the use of an actress to address the camera which is variously, torturer, lover, friend, or audience, and to speak the unspoken. The unspoken turns out to be, as one survivor puts it during her interview, not the mechanics of torture, which are by now so well known, but rather the emotional mechanics of survival, the literal subjectivity of the tortured. It is the riskier testimony of love, sex, intimacy, and social nicety that director Murat, in a gesture no doubt of emotional identification with her subjects, puts into the mouth of a well-known actress to present to the audience, thereby avoiding the added disapproval that would have met such pronouncements by any non-fictional woman.

Perhaps it is the acting style (overwrought, stagey, arch-ironic) that dooms the strategy, but it is just as likely that the very taboos that Murat sought to bypass return nonetheless to sabotage the detour. For if the figure of the woman fighter is always, in patriarchal societies, an oxymoron, then the fact of any woman's survival (not, Tania-style, her martyrdom) becomes a triple contradiction when she is converted into the mother and, in fact, bases her claim to sanity and survival upon that same motherhood. As Murat tries to demolish the very constructions of myth that have been the habitual last resort of reaction to such figures, she occasionally founders. Nevertheless, the testimony of her subjects speaking almost transparently to the audience across a wide range of devices of attempted distanciation moves the viewer with long-dormant inspiration. *Que Bom Te Ver Viva* re-genders the *guerrillera* and, in the process, poses a series of retroactive questions to the historical construction of the male hero.

VI

> An idea about the cinema that reigned when we began on this road is today dead. (. . .) We need to look collectively toward the future. As cinema becomes an extinct dinosaur, lizards and salamanders appear

> that survive the catastrophe. Today, facing reconversion and crisis, the response must be to include the species. It must derive from collective action and solidarity. (. . .) We have a lot to do. To survive. Yes. To survive not only as filmmakers or videomakers, but as cultures, as exemplars of national dignity.
>
> Paul Leduc[21]

> In the 1980s, national debt is the biggest problem. (. . .) It would seem we've gone backwards, as though we haven't made any progress. It may seem that the 1960s were radical, and the 1980s regressive. (. . .) The danger now is an attempt to make a "more perfect" cinema to try to attract a public. Its a danger because politics cannot regress, but cinema can.
>
> Julio García Espinosa[22]

The conference in Bellagio which occasioned this paper had hardly begun before we participants were spending our spare time, huddled in the library, trying to translate from the Italian papers the news of the food riots that had broken out in Venezuela. In Venezuela! It shattered all the fondest stereotypes of Latin American stability. So much for the vaunted promise of democracy, when faced with the international pincers of economic shortfall and IMF negotiations. Notions of self-determination had already been crushed, anyway, with PRI's theft of the Mexican election just months before. Soon after the Venezuela debacle, Brazil witnessed the murder of Chico Mendes and the intensification of the Amazon crisis, Cuba underwent the disaster of the Ochoa revelations (and the ongoing, equally serious, challenge of its government's seige-like response to *perestroika* and *glasnost*), and Argentina suffered its own food riots, an unimaginable inflation rate, and the election of Menem, its contemporary peronist president. The last year of the decade turned out to be a costly one for the continent. Within each country, the economics confronting film production are disastrous: local markets that can no longer return the investment necessary for late-1980s budgets, plans that require international stars and co-production money to get off the ground, movie theaters that are closing down by the hundreds as a combination of videocassette distribution and operating costs make them unprofitable.

The 1980s were a time for optimism regarding the revision and reinvention of the New Latin American Cinema in a contemporary guise. The breaking of taboo and prohibition, the freeing of the imagination to fantasy, a respect for the mundane and everyday, the introduction of humor and music, the construction of new narrative strategies, and the reconsideration of the relationship to the audience,

have all contributed to what I've identified as the monumental task of forging a new "collective subjectivity." While I've chosen to interpret these tendencies optimistically, I could also make another point about the less salutary effects of a certain kind of individualism at the level of *auteur*.

In tracing the kind of strategies that have become necessary in the wake of the declining film economies of Latin America and the loss of self-sufficiency they have brought about, I would identify as significant the recent alliance between a traditional, essentially conservative, form of authorship and a traditional, international form of co-production. The *Amores difíciles* was a series, mentioned earlier, based upon ideas or scripts by Gabriel García Márquez, utilizing the talents of notable Latin American or Spanish filmmakers, and produced by and for Spanish television. The deal, jokingly referred to as the "return of the conquistadors,"[23] got terrific ratings on its Spanish broadcast, and has won limited festival inclusion as well as theatrical, public television and video release.

Some of the films are excellent, but there are numerous problems with the series, not least of which is the absence of a single woman director in the line-up of filmmakers.[24] The very real danger of such a series is that it tends to remove any political specificity from the works that comprise it. Packaged as a Gabriel García Márquez commodity, it falls easily into the co-production pattern: the novelist is just slotted into the attraction slot in place of a famous actor. Just so are the qualities of individual national cinemas subordinated to the creation of a homogenous product, one that often (and predictably, given its *raison d'etre*) valorizes the novelistic qualities of cinema by valuing the screenplay over all other elements. Obscuring questions of intentionality and urgency, *Amores difíciles* sells itself as a product on the marketable *don Gabo*. Meanwhile, the dependence of the entire package upon García Márquez's participation gives him inordinate control over the contracting of principals and the handling of the treatments.[25]

The threat of such packaging under the sign of a single personality is that, should its success and the concomitant lack of financial alternatives lead to a proliferation, the New Latin American Cinema could enter a baroque phase: historical subjects would no longer be chosen for their particular ideological implications for a particular country at this juncture, contemporary fictional themes would no longer arise out of the specificity of an identifiable set of national circumstances, documentary would be decisively marginalized and no longer inhabit any place at all, and the very real heterogeneity that has always made "Latin America" itself such a near-fictional construct would vanish

under the homogeneity of brand-name magic realism flying a multinational banner.[26] Still, given economic forces arrayed against cinema (and life itself, sheer survival) in most of Latin America, it is not surprising that most filmmakers are grateful that Gabriel García Márquez is committed to film production and that Spanish television has seen fit to bankroll his film ideas. With Spanish television recently poised to expand this entry into a large-scale agenda of co-productions, similar fears regarding the influence of such European input must again be weighed against the necessity for just such marketing and financing strategies if the New Latin American Cinema is to survive to the turn of the century (at least Spanish money doesn't demand English as the production language).

Meanwhile, the influence of the political and economic situation in each Latin American country continues to affect its cinema far more forcefully and decisively than any co-production deal could ever dream of. In Argentina, on the eve of Menem's election, not a single film was in production thanks to the hyper-inflation ravaging the economy. In Chile, on the other hand, in the wake of the "no" vote in favor of ending Pinochet's reign, the strength of its recent cinema is starting to attract notice at film festivals internationally. The school established by Birri and García Márquez in Cuba already has its own victories and problems, its own student insurrections, and the energy of a new generation of filmmakers from throughout Latin America.

Such a constantly evolving situation demands an improvisational rigor from Latin American filmmakers, but equally demands that critics and audiences outside of Latin America give up their attachment to outmoded scales of value in assessing the cinemas that emerge from such conditions. *La lucha continúa*, the struggle continues, but the site of the battle and the choice of weapons changes by the decade. The New Latin American Cinema is dead, long live the New Latin American Cinema.

Notes

This essay was commissioned for the conference "High Culture/Popular Culture: Media Representation of the Other" held at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, February 27 to March 4, 1989. The proceedings of the conference will be published in the forthcoming book *Other Representations: Cross-Cultural Media Theory*, ed. by John G. Hanhardt and Steven D. Levine.

The original inspiration for the essay was the massive retrospective, "The Winds of Change," organized by the Toronto Festival of Festivals in September 1986, and the women's symposium at the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana, December 1986. A preliminary version appeared as "After the Revolutions: The New New Latin American Cinema," in the *Village Voice*, February 10, 1987.

My thanks to my fellow participants in the Bellagio conference for their responses to the version of this paper delivered there from notes, in particular to Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Julio García Espinosa, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Jean Franco, Juan Downey, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Lourdes Portillo. Thanks to Paul Lenti for his subsequent careful reading and helpful suggestions. Finally, thanks to Norma Iglesias Prieto, co-organizer of the conference "Cruzando Fronteras/Crossing Borders," held in November 1990 at the Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Tijuana, Mexico, for creating a forum for this work there; and to my co-participants, especially Rosa Linda Fregoso, Sonia Fritz, Carmen Huaco-Nuzum, Lillian Jímenez, Lillian Liberman and Patricia Vega, for their support and encouragement.

1. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, "The Viewer's Dialectic" in *Reviewing Histories: Selections From the New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Coco Fusco (Buffalo, NY: Hallwalls, 1987), p. 179.

2. Panel on New Latin American Cinema, moderated by author, U.S. Film Festival, Park City, Utah, January 26, 1989.

3. Recent writing has begun to take note of this evolution. See, for example: the special "Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano" issue of *Areito* (ed. Lisa Davis and Sonia Rivera), Volume X No. 37, 1984; Pat Aufderheide, "Awake Argentina," *Film Comment*, April 1986, ps. 51–55, and "Cultural Democracy: Non-Commercial Film Distribution in Latin America," *Afterimage*, November 1986, p. 12 ff; Julianne Burton, *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America: Conversations with Filmmakers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); my own "New Argentine Cinema" essay in the U.S. Film Festival catalogue, Park City, Utah, 1988; and most recently, *Latin American Visions* (ed. Pat Aufderheide and Lois Fishman), catalogue commissioned for the Latin American Visions retrospective organized by Linda Blackaby and Beatriz Vieira of the Neighborhood Film/Video Project of International House, Philadelphia.

4. Julianne Burton, *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America*, chapters 9 and 19.

5. Luis Elbert, "Neorealism," in *Latin American Visions*, p. 27.

6. Randal Johnson, *Cinema Novo X 5* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), p. 2.

7. For descriptions of this period, see Guillermo Zapiola, "Cinema Under Dictatorship" in *Latin American Visions*, ps. 38–39 and Richard Peña, "The Legacy of Cinema Novo: An Interview With Nelson Pereira Dos Santos" in *Reviewing Histories: Selections From New Latin American Cinema*, ps. 51–52.

8. E. Bradford Burns, *Latin American Cinema* (L.A.: UCLA Latin American Center, 1975), p. 27.

9. Similarly, the development of Latin American Cinema in the post-war period cannot be separated from the U.S. embargo of Argentina during World War II, part of then Secretary of State Cornell Hull's overall agenda for overthrowing the Argentine government. In 1942, allegedly punishing Argentina

for its neutrality in the war, the U.S. placed an embargo on the shipment of raw film stock to the country, a policy initiated by Nelson Rockefeller's Office for the Coordination of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) and its Motion Picture Division. At the same time, U.S. interests (including Rockefeller) began investing capital rapidly in Mexico instead. This tactic led to the decline of Argentina as the preeminent film producer to the continent and to the rise of Mexico as its market competitor. See Tim Barnard, "Popular Cinema and Populist Politics" in Barnard (ed.), *Argentine Cinema* (Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1986), p. 32–39, and John King, "The Social and Cultural Context" in *The Gardens of Forking Paths: Argentine Cinema* (ed. John King and Nissa Torrents, The British Film Institute, 1987), pp. 1–15.

10. Long unseen and lacking any North American distribution, *Los inundados* was shown for the first time ever with English subtitles at the Toronto Festival of Festivals and Pacific Film Archive in 1986. A 16mm print was struck for the Latin American Visions series by the Neighborhood Film/Video Project, and will be distributed by the Museum of Modern Art Circulating Film Department after its initial tour.

11. Born in 1913, Matilde Landeta was unknown in the U.S. and long ignored in Mexico until "rediscovered" when she came to Havana to attend the women's symposium of 1986, bringing this film under her arm. For a full theoretical discussion of the film itself, as well as the history of its making and of Landeta's career, see: Carmen Huaco-Nuzum, "Matilde Landeta: An Introduction to the Work of A Pioneer Mexican Filmmaker," *Screen*, Volume 28 No. 4, Autumn 1987, p. 96–105. The unsubtitled film was shown for the first time in the U.S. in the "Corrective Cinema" series curated by Yvonne Rainer and Berenice Reynaud at the Collective for Living Cinema in 1988. Marcela Fernández Violante directed a film on Landeta's life for Mexican television in 1983, and subsequently published "Mexican Women Film Directors" in *Voices of Mexico*, No. 6, Dec. 1987–Feb, 1988 (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México City).

12. See Jean Franco's *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York, Columbia UP, 1989) for further discussion of Mexico in this period.

13. The film was completed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, who had been Gómez's mentor and has been the most dedicated champion of her memory and her example.

14. Nissa Torrents, "An Interview With Beatriz Guido" in *The Garden of Forking Paths*, op cit., p. 47.

15. Thanks to Joao Luis Vieira for this citation.

16. Personal interview with author, Toronto Festival of Festivals, September 1986.

17. For an in-depth analysis of both this film and the Coutinho film, see: Julianne Burton, "Transitional States: Creative Complicities with the Real" in *Man Marked to Die: Twenty Years Later* and *Patriamada*," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, Volume 7, 1988, p. 139–155.

18. Personal interview with author, Toronto Festival of Festivals, September 1986.

19. Personal interview with author, Toronto Festival of Festivals, September 1986.

20. The film premiered at the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana, December 1989, where it received a jury prize; its U.S. premiere took place in spring 1990 at the San Francisco Film Festival.

21. Paul Leduc, "Dinosaurs and Lizards" in *Latin American Visions*, p. 59.

22. Statement in response to this paper, Bellagio, Italy, 1989, author's notes.

23. "The return of the conquistadors" is taken from comments to me by Helga Stephenson, director of the Toronto Festival of Festivals, as published in my article on the series in the *New York Times* in August, 1989.

24. The Venezuelan film, *Un domingo feliz (A Happy Sunday)*, was originally slated for direction by Fina Torres, who dropped out of the picture, reportedly after irreconcilable differences with García Márquez.

25. This threat is heightened by García Márquez's role as the presiding patriarch of the *Fundación*, which, with offices in Havana and Mexico City, has become the prime hope of Latin American filmmakers in search of production and co-production monies.

26. I'd argue that it's not just coincidence that makes *Milagro en Roma (Miracle in Rome)* the very best of the series. In part due to the extraordinary talent of director Lisandro Duque, its success may also be ascribed to its being the only Colombian production in the series and thus benefitting from a grounding in the specificity of García Márquez's own culture.

The New Latin American Cinema

A Modernist Critique of Modernity

Zuzana M. Pick

The ideological agenda of the New Latin American Cinema cannot be detached from historical discourses on regional identity through which the specificity of Latin American cultural practices has been defined. Its distinctive profile as a cinematographic movement is grounded in the idea of unity within diversity. The movement developed historically within the recognition of dialectic interactions between regional expressions, national projects, and continental ideals, thus linking its project to the idea of Latin America as a historical entity.

This idea of Latin America, in the words of José Luis Avellán, "expresses the consciousness of a cultural unity capable of extending itself to the rest of the continent."[1] Furthermore, as Angel Rama pointed out, this idea "is founded on persuasive arguments and supported by concrete and powerful unifying forces. Most reside in the past and have profoundly shaped the life of nations ranging from a common history to a common language and similar models of behavior. Others are contemporary, their minority status is compensated by significant promise: they react to universal economic and political impulses brought about by the expansion of the dominant civilizations of the planet."[2]

The idea of a continental identity emerged as a means of questioning the positivist utopias of progress that displaced the colonial legacy after Latin American countries consolidated themselves as modern

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nation-states. This ontological search for distinctiveness was based on a sense of a shared destiny and a common identity. But, as Rama stated, "underneath unity, concrete as a project and real as the bases that sustain it, unfolds an internal diversity that defines the continent more precisely."[3] This diversity is made up of regional cultures that form, to quote Rama again, "a second Latin American map more accurate and concrete than the official."[4]

Latin Americans have assumed the history and envisioned the future of the continent in the layering of regional specificities (those inflected by locality) and through narrative negotiations of nation, class, race (of which the exclusion of native American and African populations cannot be overlooked), and gender. In this way Latin Americans have endowed themselves with a continental identity, "a grand historical narrative" that, as Gerald Martin writes, "is the continent's own dominant self-interpretation."[5] This continental identity has permitted Latin Americans "to move beyond the futile limitations of national identity in the direction of some humanistic continental culture as part of the global community of tomorrow."[6] By ascertaining the symbolic power of continental nationalism, this identity produces a sense of shared community that recognizes itself within interregional (and intraregional) variations, countering state-defined allegiances and differences.

Hence, this idea of Latin America is more than simply a myth or a utopia. It is a discursive formation whereby the history and imagination of the continent can be reclaimed. As a discourse, this idea operates both within the fleeting memories of the past and the material concreteness of the present. On the one hand, this idea has served to articulate regional autonomy and self-determination, countervailing the historical failure of countries to set up durable pan-Latin American political and economic organizations. On the other hand, the idea of Latin America is grounded in the desire of self-definition as well as the struggle for the control and autonomy of culture and identity.

This determination has as much to do with ideology as with the characteristic resilience of concepts of Latin American culture and identity. As Edward Said suggests, "Culture is used to designate not merely something to which one belongs but something that one possesses and, along with that proprietary process, culture also designates a boundary by which the concepts of what is extrinsic or intrinsic to the culture come into forceful play."[7] From this perspective, cultural historians in Latin America have consistently sought to discuss identity neither as an apparently obvious nor a transparent position of self-recognition.

If the idea of Latin America is a construct, an imaginative and evolving projection (not less imagined than the communities that are represented by it and represent themselves in it), it is "one possessing all the institutional force and affect of the real."[8] The search for means of representing national and continental realities, collective and individual identity, is the keyword that best characterizes the creative and political projects of Latin America. Nowhere is this search more explicit than in artistic practices, in visual arts, music, cinema, and literature.

Maybe a few examples are in order. The Uruguayan painter José Gamarra, as Oriana Baddeley and Valerie Fraser point out, "combines an ideal image of the tropical Latin American landscape with an acute awareness of the irony of the parallel history of conquest, colonization and exploitation."[9] Set within the luxurious jungle vegetation are tiny figures of people and objects, sometimes narrating an incident, like the beheading of a nun in *From the Series of Masked Aggressions* (1983), which refers to the rape and murder of American nuns by the Salvadorean army in 1980. In this painting, the tropical forest is invoked simultaneously as a mythical and an actual place, the site upon which Europe imagined the Americas and the place where Latin America's violent history is still being played out.

Another example of the powerful effect of the idea of Latin America can be found in Barroco (1989), a film by Paul Leduc that attempts a synthesis of what Gabriel García Márquez called the "outsized reality" of Latin America.[10] Based on *Concierto barroco* (1974), a novella by Alejo Carpentier in which the Cuban writer pays tribute to his lifelong passion for music, this formally ambitious and complex film celebrates the syncretism, the cultural cross-fertilization of the Old World and the New World. Juxtaposing high culture and popular art, indigenous, Afro-Caribbean, and European music, dance, and performance, the film explores the intertextual expressiveness of the Latin American imagination.

Moreover, the idiosyncratic distinctiveness of this construct (the idea of Latin America), in regard to more discrete formations like nations, is its composite character. The national becomes international, superseding—without overriding—individuation. To the extent that Latin America is imagined as a "Patria Grande," the mutual and interlocking awareness of diversity within a relative cultural homogeneity has (more often than not) been concurrently inflected by nationalism and internationalism. Promoted as a polemical objection to traditional nationalist or universalist ideologies, the idea has historically been a battlefield where national, regional, and continental identities are

contested and renamed. It has been continuously questioned and redefined.

Debates about national (or, for that matter, continental) identity have often revolved around the values defined either as authentic or derivative. This dichotomy has tended to obscure the conscious acceptance of the ambivalent origins of identity, what Robert Stam calls the "ironic echo" of Latin American practices, and is suggestive of the fusion of European and Latin American modernism.[11] In other words, identity is both already available—in the form of historical traditions—and still to be achieved—in the form of a modernist break with the past. This de-centered, yet historical, notion of identity is reflective and self-reflective. It implies an awareness of a history determined by conquest and revolution, by dependence and autonomy.

The cultural consciousness of nations and regions, communities and classes, languages and representations has been forged against state-imposed hegemony and in resistance. As Carlos Fuentes suggests, "The complexity of the cultural struggles underlying our political and economic struggles has to do with unresolved tensions, sometimes as old as the conflict between pantheism and monotheism, or as recent as the conflict between tradition and modernity."[12] The idea of Latin America is obsessed concurrently with the past and the present, with narratives of injustice and protest. These narratives are essentially modern. They promote discourses aimed at locating, identifying, and engaging with concepts of progress and projects of modernization, either to commend or censure them.

To attach the idea of Latin America to modernity requires a clarification of what is meant by modernity. To this purpose, I favor seeing modernity in the terms suggested by the Mexican cultural critic Carlos Monsiváis. In his address to the prestigious Coloquio de Invierno held in Mexico City in 1992, Monsiváis remarked on the modernity (and liberating agency) of social and cultural projects motivated by criticism, free expression, and tolerance. Because, as he says, "in the debate of modernity, democracy is central to the renewal of the forms and contents of political and cultural life, and it may be, or not, a barrier against authoritarianism. . . ."[13] In other words, modernity is "an inevitable paradigm" that calls forth and contests visions of tradition and progress, and a site that "engenders a sense of the future, so irrefutable because it is so unstoppable."[14]

From this perspective, the distinctive effort of self-definition that characterizes the New Latin American Cinema can be seen as a conscious attempt to assume the idea of Latin America as its ideological foundation. Moreover, the movement has articulated its continental project within a modernist contestation of tradition. At its inception in

the late 1960s, the movement broke with the national cinemas, such as those of Argentina and Mexico, that once dominated Spanish-language production. The manifestos and critical essays written by the filmmakers are polemical—even dogmatic—in their dismissal of what the filmmakers called the *old* cinemas of Latin America.

Through this conscious rupture with traditional cinemas, the New Latin American Cinema launched a project of cinematographic renewal that was defined from the outset as revolutionary and anti-imperialist. Through this agenda the movement asserted the creation of new expressive spaces and the rejection of traditional genres. The movement challenged the hegemony of North American and European models of cinematographic production and consumption. In this way, filmmakers advocated an oppositional and innovative cinema. As militants and artists, they saw themselves capable of transforming the existing structures of filmmaking. In the 1960s the movement's cultural politics converged (at least through its most militant practices) with left-wing insurrectional tactics that spread throughout Latin America after the Cuban Revolution. As I have written elsewhere, the films of the movement called for "direct political action: denouncing injustice, misery and exploitation, analyzing [their] causes and consequences, replacing humanism by violence."[15]

Concurrently, the movement addressed from the onset contextually specific and distinctive issues. Through discussions generated by filmmakers in different countries, the movement debated, as John King remarks, "the question of the appropriate filmic language for particular situations; the whole vexed question of what was a 'national reality'; the uneasy relationship between filmmakers (largely middle-class intellectuals) and the 'people' they hoped to represent; and the nature of popular culture."[16] In this manner, the movement furthered critical and reflective approaches to cultural production and representation. It sanctioned an aesthetic capable of rearticulating itself into the collective by breaking hierarchical modes of address. The films sought to assert new forms of dialogue and contest the master narratives of the status quo.

By bringing together filmmakers, the movement encouraged generational and regional solidarity. It also stimulated projects committed to an alternative modernism which, in Marshall Berman's words, "assert[s] the presence and the dignity of all the people who have been left out."[17] Although the anti-imperialist rhetoric and the cultural nationalism of the 1960s concealed the term *modernity* under the guises of Marxist theories of dependency and cultural resistance, the issue of modernity was not extraneous to the New Latin American Cinema.[18] Filmmakers problematized either through their films or their

writings what has been termed the "discourse of present-ness," a discourse that "takes into account its own presentness, in order to find its place, to pronounce its own meaning, and to specify the mode of action which it is capable of exercising within this present."[19]

This "discourse of present-ness" is crucial to many of the films of New Latin American Cinema. As filmmakers have sought to insert themselves into the social and political spheres, they consciously assumed their role as initiators of change. Through critical writings and manifestos, they proposed modes suitable to distinct forms of creative and political militancy. Their films served to make ideological positions explicit and to intervene ideologically in favor of social change through aesthetic strategies that link interactively the process of production and the moment of reception.

To the extent that a self-declared community of activist filmmakers assumed (through the works of its members) the role of an artistic and political vanguard, the project of the New Latin American Cinema suggests comparisons with groups whose agendas were defined in terms of cultural nationalism. Ambrosio Fornet, for instance, suggests that by the end of the 1960s, the New Latin American Cinema "has definitely acquired the orientation and the physiognomy which, without doubt, will filter through the history of Latin American culture as one of the most innovative and astonishing phenomena of this century. In fact, the only valid precedent could be found in the Mexican muralist movement: the same search for native roots, the same eagerness of decolonization, the same will to create a new language that would be, in the context of world painting, a contemporary language."[20]

This comparison should not be taken as a self-serving accolade, but rather as a critical projection aimed at reclaiming, through parallelisms, the historical legacy of cultural nationalism. Hence, it is useful to recall a statement by Diego Rivera, the most prominent of the Mexican muralists, who wrote: "I had the ambition to reflect the genuine essential expression of the land. I wanted my pictures to mirror the social life of Mexico as I saw it and through the reality and arrangement of the present, the masses were to be shown the possibilities of the future. I sought to be . . . a condenser of the striving and longing of the masses and a transmitter providing for the masses a synthesis of their wishes so as to serve them as an organizer of consciousness and aid their social organization."[21]

Similarly, Robert Stam and Ismail Xavier link the modernist-internationalist inflections of Brazilian tropicalist films, such as *Macunaíma* (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1968) and *Red Light Bandit* (Rogerio Szangarela), to Oswald de Andrade's anticolonial metaphor

of "anthropophagy" defined in the 1920s. As Stam and Xavier write, tropicalist modernism "was a kind of artistic shock treatment designed to sabotage a falsely optimistic nationalism. The tropicalist allegory presented its diagnosis by mingling the native and the foreign, the folkloric and the industrial, the supermodern and the hyper-archaic, provoking the aesthetic prejudices of the middle class audience by foregrounding all that was incongruous and grotesque in Brazilian society."[22]

The cultural nationalism of the New Latin American Cinema signals an engagement not only with a contemporary anti-imperialist rhetoric but also with the history of movements which, in different countries, sought to radicalize cultural practices. It should not come as a surprise that practitioners of the New Latin American Cinema in the 1960s would reinstate the ideals of cultural nationalism that emerged in the 1920s, a period of intense social and political upheaval. Jean Franco's comments on Brazil are equally applicable to other Latin American countries. She has written that cultural life has been characterized by "the tension between the need for roots and the urge for modernity, between those who want to stress local or regional characteristics and those who want Brazil to be in the forefront of world culture."[23]

For instance, the notion of popular cinema developed by Latin American filmmakers (as an agent of change, requiring political choices and innovative aesthetic options to release popular creativity) reflects this tension between tradition and modernity. Not only has this popular (and reflective) cinema reconstructed the subversive power of popular traditions and historical memory, but deconstructed the representations and discourses that have limited the self-representation of Latin American peoples. Thus, the filmmakers of the New Latin American Cinema have reacted to—but not acquiesced to—hegemonic discourses on modernity. On the contrary, their radical project is characterized by the need to engage critically with the issue of modernity, either as an ideology of progress or an avant-garde aesthetic.

By operating within the dynamic dialectics of modernity, the movement has (like other cultural practices in Latin America) coalesced into formative impulses—what Rama called *impulsos modeladores*—grounded in the search for autonomy, originality, and representativity.[24] These formative impulses constitute precisely the basis upon which the New Latin American Cinema has periodically redefined its ideological and aesthetic project.

To assert the autonomy of cinematographic practices, the filmmakers associated with the movement have identified elements relevant to

changing cultural, social, and political conditions. They have drawn upon cinematographic concepts advanced in other historical contexts only to transform them, to make them more suitable to national and continental realities. On the influence of Italian neorealism, for instance, Fernando Birri has said, "Neo-realism was the cinema that discovered amidst the clothing and the rhetoric of development another Italy, the Italy of underdevelopment. It was a cinema of the humble and the offended which could be readily taken up by filmmakers all over what has since come to be called the third world."[25]

The New Latin American Cinema has also sought to authorize distinct conceptual frameworks through manifestos and critical essays written by its filmmakers. Julio García Espinosa's "For an Imperfect Cinema," for instance, has contributed to the originality of the movement's agenda. The impossibility of practicing art as an impartial activity and popular art conceived as a dynamically active entity have been revolutionary alternatives that "can supply an entirely new response [and] enable us to do away once and for all with elitist concepts and practices in art."[26]

Moreover, the representativity of the movement has been validated by the international and continental circulation of the ideas and films associated with the New Latin American Cinema. Although film historians, critics, and researchers in Latin America and elsewhere are beginning to take a serious look at the cinemas produced before the emergence of the movement, the movement prevails as a referential term of Latin American cinemas. As John King writes, it "show[s] that there is a network of formal and informal contacts that unites film-making practices across and within their national diversities."[27]

To confront the pervasive contradictions of political, social, and economic processes in Latin America, the movement reasserted the role of cinema as a critically interactive space of communication. Insofar as filmmakers began exploring the realities of their countries, as Michael Chanan points out, they discovered "a subjective world, made up of the oral culture that is called folklore, and the amalgam of religious and magical beliefs that are sustained by the misfortune and ignorance of underdevelopment."[28] Rather than forfeiting the militancy of the 1960s, filmmakers sought to remap the intricate dialectics of history and class struggle, memory and representation.

Consistently preoccupied with political agency and social process, and critical of the modernization tendencies of nation-states, the filmmakers of the New Latin American Cinema denounced a modernity based on self-confident promises of progress. Mostly in the 1960s, films stressed class struggle as the only possible way out of social injustice. To restore the subject into history, filmmakers systematically

addressed in their writings national identity through the pervading usage of an all-encompassing notion of national reality. Yet the films studied in this book [Pick, New Latin American Cinema] (in contrast to the writings of Latin American filmmakers) problematize the erasure of regional, social, racial, and sexual differences implied by the term *national reality* and privilege subjective and collective identities as embattled sites of representation and discourse. In its project to rearrange the terms that have served to construct national identities, the films of the New Latin American Cinema expose the evolving, rather than foundational, essence of the national. By the 1980s, for instance, filmmakers addressing issues of gender and ethnicity have questioned ahistorical presumptions and romantic celebrations of cultural difference and have freed gender and ethnicity from their problematic appropriation in national allegories.

Once armed with a critical agenda, the movement was capable of projecting its history into the future. Through a self-defined identity, as a regional enterprise, the movement has been able to persist as a valid political endeavor. Throughout the 1970s, for instance, the movement weathered speculations about an impending collapse. As Ana López points out, "The New Latin American Cinema, often forced into exile or silenced by censorship and repression at a national level, assumed an increasingly pan-Latin American character [see López essay in part 1 of this volume.]"[29] Moreover, institutional rearrangements and economic growth were promoting commercial trends that affected national practices profoundly. But filmmakers also found in new institutional arrangements the possibility of relocating initiatives, previously supported only by the movement, into national practices. Their initiatives energized rather than weakened the movement and the New Cinema of Latin America integrated these national inflections into its supranational design.

The films of the 1970s opted for narrative and aesthetic strategies (sometimes self-reflexive but always critical) capable of resolving the anachronism of underdevelopment. Moreover, the movement sought to expand its terms of reference and, rather than narrowing itself by prescriptive definitions, set out to disengage its innovational goals from the confining rhetoric of the militant 1960s. The term Third Cinema, for instance, often used to describe the politics of Latin American cinemas, was rearticulated to reflect its original impulse as a critically conscious and experimental agency of signification. In 1979 Fernando Ezequiel Solanas explained again that the Third Cinema "is the way the world is conceptualized and not the genre nor the explicitly political character of a film. . . . Third Cinema is an open

category, unfinished, incomplete. It is a research category. It is a democratic, national, popular cinema."[30]

By the 1980s, the New Latin American Cinema identified much more closely with a modernist aesthetic. What Fernando Birri called the "nationalist, realist, critical, and popular" practices of the New Latin American Cinema in the early 1980s are "a poetics of the transformation of reality . . . [that] generates a creative energy which through cinema aspires to modify the reality upon which it is projected."[31] At the basis of this poetics is a critical impulse that can reinvent itself in and through the heterogeneous elements and contradictory discourses of a continent at once unitary and diverse.

The experience of exile, for instance, has been crucial to the production of a new political agency whereby community associations are relocated, cultural specificity is renegotiated, and cultural affiliations are reconstructed. Geographic and cultural displacement has fostered decentered views on identity and nationality, stressed the dialectics of historical and personal circumstance, and validated autobiography as a reflective site. If this aspect is most prominent in films produced in exile, it can also be found in other films of the New Cinema of Latin America which evidence a greater variety of approaches to the political.

While the movement's history provides a framework for understanding the ever-fluctuating situation of filmmaking practices, its conceptual agenda provides insights into the dialectics of representation and cultural politics in Latin America. As Julianne Burton has pointed out, "More than the determination to give expression to new forms and new contents, the most significant aspect of oppositional film movements in the Third World has been their fundamental commitment to transforming existing modes of film production, diffusion and reception."[32]

The movement has sought to integrate culture and politics, to construct instances in which cinematic practices intersect with social change. Therefore, the political and cultural agenda of the New Latin American Cinema has advocated grassroots forms of participation and supported film and video collectives that seek to channel the aspirations of social movements. The movement has contributed to increasing collaborative ventures between filmmakers from countries where the survival of nationally based initiatives has been threatened.

The movement's historical agency—its capacity of self-definition and self-regulation—is grounded in a political and aesthetic agenda (rather than the formal affinity of its national components). As a discursive formation and a cultural practice, the movement has accommodated ideological and contextual realignments. Therefore, it is

essential to understand that the movement's specificity resides in the convergence of nationally based practices, including the infrastructural changes affecting filmmakers and their practices, with a pan-continental project.

Insofar as the movement's unified sense of purpose has been capable of controlling the diversity of production strategies, a flexible (rather than a restrictive) approach is required to grasp the impact of infrastructural and organizational changes on the historical consciousness of the New Latin American Cinema. This approach allows an understanding of how the movement's continental orientation, through a process of self-definition, controls the eclecticism of its cinematographic practices.

But in reaction to the movement's singular process of self-definition, Latin American film historians and critics have tended to contest a perceived erasure of contextual considerations.[33] Notwithstanding my agreement with the basic premise of some of these criticisms, I would argue that the New Latin American Cinema emerges as a site of struggle between diverging, and sometimes contentious, processes of historical construction. Latin American identity has been shaped by cultural practices that have sanctioned or contested prevalent forms of representation and social organization. By authorizing different approaches to production, distribution, and exhibition, the movement has endorsed radical forms of filmmaking capable of revolutionizing existing social relations.

By adopting critical realism and advocating modernist aesthetic options, the films of the New Latin American Cinema have served to reinterpret and redefine the place of film, as a cultural and political practice, within the often contradictory, but always material, realities of the continent. In a sense the movement is representative of what Rodolfo Parada calls the *mestizaje definitivo* of Latin America. In other words, the movement originates from an awareness and a sense of belonging produced at that "moment in our history when we acquire the notion of our worth and in which we decide to follow our ambitions. When we decide not to be imitators and followers, we begin to see the world in relation to who we really are, in relation to the Americas, as Latin Americans."[34]

Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes described this process when he wrote about Brazilian cinema: "We are neither Europeans nor North Americans. Lacking an original culture, nothing is foreign to us because everything is. The painful construction of ourselves develops within the rarefied dialectic of not being and being someone else."[35] To the extent that this "not being and being someone else" reasserts the yet untold and multiple narratives of cultural identity and national

realities, it is the principle upon which Latin Americans have challenged fixed notions and imagined new utopias.

This principle conforms to "a sense of forever-not-yet being," as Bell Gale Chevigny suggests, "which may constitute an identity in itself."[36] Moreover, this principle implies critique and renewal and is profoundly attached to an unfinished experience of modernity whereby a yet-to-be-constructed modernity can be envisioned. As far as the New Latin American Cinema is concerned, this principle is exemplified in the movement's characteristic logic: its belief that its ideological project remains unfinished.

Notes

1. José Luis Abellán, *La idea de América: Origen y evolución* (Madrid: Ediciones Istmo, 1972), p. 21.

2. Angel Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI Editores, 1985), p. 57.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 58.

5. Gerald Martin, *Journeys through the Labyrinth* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 9.

6. Ibid., p. 359.

7. Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 8–9.

8. Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yarger, eds., *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1992), pp. 11–12.

9. Oriana Baddeley and Valerie Fraser, *Drawing the Line: Art and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Latin America* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 24.

10. Gabriel García Márquez, "The Solitude of Latin America," in Doris Meyer, ed., *Lives on the Line: The Testimony of Contemporary Latin American Authors* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) pp. 230–234.

11. Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 123.

12. Carlos Fuentes, *Myself with Others* (New York: Noonday Press, 1990), p. 205.

13. Carlos Monsiváis, "Cultura: Tradición y modernidad," *La Jornada*, February 21, 1992.

14. Ibid.

15. Zuzana M. Pick, ed., *Latin American Film Makers and the Third World* (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1978), p. 2.

16. John King, *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 69.

17. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Peguin Books), p. 8.

18. The Latin American left (particularly the one represented by monolithic communist parties and Marxist-Leninist factions) refused modernity because modernization was presumed and understood as synonymous with capitalism and exploitation. Nonetheless, leftist rhetoric in the 1960s locked into an interpretation of modernity which, according to Monsiváis ("Cultura: Tradición y modernidad," n.p.), went as follows: "The revolution was culture (in abstract or sectarian terms), tradition (significant because it generated in the people) and modernity, without that name, because a revolutionary became, at once, the vanguard of humanity."

19. Michel Foucault, quoted in Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. xv.

20. Ambrosio Fornet, *Cine, literatura, sociedad* (Havana: Editorial Letas Cubanas, 1982), p. 22.

21. Bertram D. Wolfe, *Diego Rivera: His Life and Times*, quoted in Jean Franco, *The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 89.

22. Robert Stam and Ismail Xavier, "Transformation of National Allegory: Brazilian Cinema from Dictatorship to Redemocratization," in Robert Sklar and Charles Musser, eds., Resisting Images: Essays on Cinema and History (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), p. 290.

23. Franco, *The Modern Culture of Latin America*, p. 293.

24. Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, p. 14.

25. Quoted in Michael Chanan, ed., *Twenty-Five Years of the New Latin American Cinema* (London: BFI/Channel Four, 1983), p. 2.

26. Julio García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," trans. Julianne Burton, in Michael Channan, ed., *Twenty-Five Years of the New Latin American Cinema* (London: BFI/Channel Four, 1983), p. 31.

27. King, *Magical Reels*, p. 76.

28. Chanan, ed., *Twenty-Five Years of the New Latin American Cinema*, p. 5.

29. Ana López, "An 'Other' History: The New Cinema of Latin America," in Robert Sklar and Charles Musser, eds., Resisting Images: Essays on Cinema and History (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), p. 325.

30. Quoted in Willemen, "The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections," *Framework*, no. 34, p. 9; translated from Solanas's "L'influence du troisième cinéma dans le monde," which appeared in *CinémAction* and in *Revue Tiers Monde* 20, no. 79 (July–September 1979): 622.

31. Fernando Birri, "For a Nationalist, Realist, Critical and Popular Cinema," *Screen* 26, nos. 3–4 (May–August 1985), p. 90.

32. Julianne Burton, "Marginal Cinemas and Mainstream Critical Theory, "*Screen* 26, nos. 3–4 (May–August 1985), p. 12.

33. During the 1987 conference on Latin American cinema, held at the University of Iowa, two prominent critics and historians—Isaac León Frias from Peru and Jorge Ayala Blanco from Mexico—explained the inappropriateness of the term "New Cinema" to categorize the cinematographic practices

of Latin America. They recalled that the term had historically limited the critical approach to productions reflecting the ideological agenda of the early manifestations of the movement.

34. Roberto Parada Lillo, "Identidad cultural y política," *Literatura chilena: Creación y crítica* (Los Angeles, Madrid), 10, no. 1/35 (January–March 1986): 9–10.

35. Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes, "Cinema: A Trajectory within Underdevelopment," in Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, eds., *Brazilian Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), p. 245.

36. Bell Gale Chevigny, "'Insatiable Unease': Melville and Carpentier and the Search for an American Hermeneutic," in Gale Chevigny and Gari Laguardia, eds., *Reinventing the Americas: Comparative Studies of Literature of the United Sates and Spanish America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 36.

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Cinema

A Trajectory within Underdevelopment

Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes

Brazil is a prolongation of the west, and Brazilian cinema is firmly rooted in western culture. Unlike some Third World countries, Brazil was never colonized as such. The European "colonizer" found the native "colonized" inadequate and opted to create another. The massive importation of Europeans followed by widespread miscegenation assured the creation of a new colonized, although the incompetence of the colonizer aggravated natural adversities. The peculiarity of this process, by which the colonizer created the colonized in his own image, made the colonized, to a certain point, his equal. Psychologically, the colonized and the colonizer do not see themselves in these roles; in fact, we are ourselves the colonizer; it would thus be sociologically absurd to imagine expelling the colonizer as the French were expelled from Algeria. The events of our history—Independence, the Republic, the Revolution of 1930—are merely quarrels among the colonizers in which the colonized have no role. The situation is more complicated because the real colonizer is elsewhere, in Lisbon, Madrid, London, or Washington.[1]

We are neither Europeans nor North Americans. Lacking an original culture, nothing is foreign to us because everything is. The painful construction of ourselves develops within the rarified dialectic of not being and being someone else. Brazilian film participates in this mechanism and alters it through our creative incapacity for copying. Cinema in Brazil witnesses and delineates many national vicissitudes.

Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, *Brazilian Cinema*. East Brunswick, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1982, pp. 245–55. By permission of the publisher.

Born in developed countries, it soon arrived in Brazil. If cinema did not become a Brazilian habit for approximately a decade, it was due to our underdevelopment in electricity. Once energy was industrialized in Rio de Janeiro, exhibition halls proliferated like mushrooms. The owners of these halls at first merely traded in foreign films, but soon began to produce their own, and thus, for a period of four or five years, starting in 1908, Rio experienced a flourishing of cinematic production that the period's major film historian calls the *Bela Época* of Brazilian cinema. Awkward copies of what was being done in Europe and America, these films, dealing with topics of immediate public interest—crimes, politics, and other diversions—were Brazilian not only in their choice of themes, but also in the lack of sophistication with which they handled the foreign instrument. The first Brazilian films, technically inferior to imported films, were nevertheless more attractive to the still naive spectator unaccustomed to the high-level finishing of foreign products. No imported film enjoyed the box-office triumph of Brazilian films dealing with local crimes or politics. The public for these films included the intelligentsia that circulated along the Rua do Ouvidor or the recently inaugurated Avenida Central. This florescence of an underdeveloped, necessarily artisan, cinema coincided with the definitive transformation, in the foreign metropolises, of the invention into an international industry whose products stimulated and disciplined world markets. Brazil, which imported everything—even coffins and toothpicks—happily opened its doors to mass-produced entertainment, and it occurred to no one to protect and foster our own incipient cinematic activity.

Early Brazilian films were soon forgotten. The line of development was broken, and our cinema began to pay its tribute to the premature and prolonged decadence so typical of underdevelopment. Scrounging for sustenance, reduced to a marginal activity, it was a pariah in a situation very much like that of the colonized whose image it frequently reflected, provoking revulsion or amazement. Such documents, when truthful, are never pretty, and they traumatized not only the liberal commentators in Rio's press, but also such conservatives as Oliveira Vianna. Images of human degradation also abounded in the narrative films then being produced from time to time and that occasionally obtained normal exhibition thanks to the ephemeral complacency of North American commerce. Meanwhile, the dauntless defenders of Brazilian cinema in the silent era attempted to discourage images of destitution, substituting them with the pleasant photogeneity of North American inspiration.

Shortly after the strangulation of the first surge of Brazilian cinema the North Americans swept away their European competitors and occupied the terrain almost exclusively for themselves. Because of them and to their benefit, exhibition was renovated and expanded. European productions continued to trickle in, but during the three generations in which film was the principal form of entertainment, cinema in Brazil was North American and, to a lesser extent, Brazilian. American cinema so saturated the market and occupied so much space in the collective imagination of colonizer and colonized alike, excluding only the lowest strata of the social pyramid, that it seemed to belong to us. Once again, nothing is foreign because everything is. The consumption of American films did not, however, satisfy the desire to see Brazilian culture develop its own vigor and personality. The traditional arts of spectacle, although challenged by the cinema, found ways to persevere, because they corresponded to profound necessities of cultural expression. Radio gave new life to these arts, and at the first opportunity popular culture manifested itself cinematically, breaking through the North American monopoly. The advent of talking films, which coincided with the Wall Street crisis, brought a transitory alleviation of the North American presence, and resulted almost immediately in a renewal of our production. At this time, *caipira* ("rural, hillbilly") culture, originally common to landowners and tenant farmers and with a large urban audience, took cinematic form, as did urban musical expression. These films attracted an immense audience through Brazil, but soon the market reverted to the North Americans and Brazilian cinema returned to its marginal status despite the artistic quality of some films of the thirties. Obligatory exhibition furnished a solid base for the production of short documentary films, now without the revelatory function that had previously characterized them. They continued, in any case, to reflect the colonizer, notably in his official ceremonies. Generally, however, talking films favored national expression more than silent ones.

The cinema that developed in Rio de Janeiro in the forties marked a milestone in the development of Brazilian cinema. The uninterrupted production during nearly twenty years of musical films and *chanchadas* occurred independent of the tastes of the colonizer and contrary to foreign interests. The young, popular audience that guaranteed the success of these films found in them, re-elaborated and rejuvenated models that, although not without links to broad Western traditions, also emanated directly from a tenacious Brazilian heritage. To these relatively stable values the films added ephemeral *carioca* features in the form of anecdotes and manners of speech, thought and behavior, a continuous flow that the *chanchada* crystallized even more effectively than caricature or variety theater. It goes without saying that these films carried with them, along with their public, the cruel

mark of underdevelopment. The relationship between the films and the spectator was incomparably more lively than with the corresponding foreign product. In the latter case the relationship entailed consumer passivity, while with the *chanchada* it involved an intimate relationship of creative participation. The universe constructed by North American films is relatively distant and abstract, while the rudimentary fragments of Brazil proposed by our films at least described a world lived by the spectators. American cinema provided model forms of behavior to young men and women linked to the colonizers; in contrast, the mass enthusiasm for the rascals, scoundrels, and loafers of the *chanchada* suggested a struggle of the colonized against the colonizer.

The profit obtained by this unpretentious and artisan *carioca* production played, in the early fifties, a determining role in São Paulo's attempt to create a more ambitious industrial and artistic cinema. The *carioca* producers were also involved in exhibition, and in this the economic structures created in the forties resembled those of the *Bela Época*. The São Paulo entrepreneurs, in contrast, nurtured the naive illusion that movie theaters would screen any film submitted, including national films. Culturally the project was disastrous. Dismissing the popular virtues of *carioca* cinema, the *paulistas* decided—encouraged by recently arrived European technicians and artists—to point Brazilian cinema in a totally different direction. When they finally discovered the *cangaceiro* genre, or when they turned to radio-style comedies, it was already too late.

The enthusiasm that aroused this attempt at industrialization was nonetheless positive, and its failure did not alter the quantitative and qualitative progress of Brazilian cinema. The marginalization of our fiction films ceased to be a "natural" phenomenon. Large sectors of the colonizer became concerned with national cinema, making it a sensitive topic of discussion. Mediocrity did not impede its functioning nor hide its presence. Filmmakers began to demand from the state something more than occasional paternalistic support. Once again the government fostered the illusion that a national film policy was being designed, but the basic situation remained the same. The market continued to be colonized by foreign cinema. Although pressured by Brazilian producers, representing in this case the interests of the colonized, the government limited its efforts to reserving a small portion of the market for local production. State power was fundamentally allied with the colonizer, whose pressure remained decisive. Even after cinema lost predominance to television, the scandalous imbalance between national and foreign interests did not change. At any rate, this concession, however modest, assured our fiction films a brief

respite. Foreign saturation did not prevent our films from reflecting our culture. The vogue of Neo-Realism had extremely fruitful consequences for us. The diffuse socialist sentiment spreading in the late forties touched many people linked to cinema, including the most creative personalities to arise in the wake of São Paulo's failed attempt at industrialization. Even orthodox communist politics came to have a cultural function in so far as it tried, however clumsily, to understand the life of the colonized and encouraged the reading of great writers who were members or sympathizers of the party: Jorge Amado, Graciliano Ramos, Monteiro Lobato. This intellectual climate and the practice of the Neo-Realist method led to some films in Rio and São Paulo that dealt artistically with popular urban life. The idle hero of the *chanchada* was supplanted by the worker, but the occupied was much more present on the screen than in the audience. In their dramatic construction, these works went far beyond both the tenacious *chanchada* and the products of São Paulo's ephemeral industrialization. Their intellectual contribution was even greater. Without being politically didactic, they expressed a social consciousness frequent in post-Modernist literature but as yet unseen in our cinema. These few films constituted the seed from which Cinema Novo grew.

After the *Bela Época* and the *chanchada*, Cinema Novo constitutes the third important moment of our cinema. Like the *Bela Época*, Cinema Novo thrived for only a half-dozen years—both of them were truncated, the former by the economic pressure of foreign imperialism, the latter by the impositions of internal politics. Despite different circumstances, what happened to both is inserted in the general context of occupation. Cinema Novo formed part of a broader and more profound current that also expressed itself through popular music, theater, the social sciences, and literature. This current—composed of individual spirits of luminous maturity and the uninterrupted explosion of young talents—was the most polished cultural expression of a broad historical phenomenon. Our close proximity to this movement renders a balanced perspective difficult. Only the colonizer/colonized framework allows for an understanding of the overall significance of Cinema Novo.

Statistics confirm what our intuition tells us about the deformations of Brazilian society. Only thirty percent of the population participates actively in what we regard as normal production and consumption. The urban and rural productive forces, the middle class in its complex gradations, the masses of people who once attended political rallies and who are now limited to soccer games are included in this minority of 30 million people. One has the impression that the colonizer uses only a small portion of the colonized and abandons the rest to God's

will. This remainder of around 70 million people provides a reserve labor force that the colonizer uses for such activities as the construction of Brasília or the interminable reconstruction of the urban monster that is São Paulo, the most progressive face of our underdevelopment. Those who thus escape the shapeless universe of the marginalized millions acquire an identity, however condescending: *candango* or *baiano*.[2]

Governmental initiatives in the second half of the fifties were designed to promote a more just national equilibrium. The colonizer, without much imagination, indicted the social fervor that accompanied such measures with a slogan: subversion on the march. Possibly even the optimistic colonizer, desirous of seeing the seventy percent marginal population integrated into the nation, did not fathom the singular situation that had been created. The word subversion, narrow minded and in the final analysis naive, can be opposed with the notion of "superversion," which summarizes with greater honesty the events that developed until mid-1964. The true marginals, it came to be understood, were the thirty percent that ruled the nation. Communication between this minority and the immense remainder of the Brazilian population began to lead to the dislocation of the traditional axis of Brazilian history. The first step was to encourage the discovery of the potentialities of all human beings. The state participated in this noble hope, notably through an emerging literacy program. The young artistic and intellectual sectors undoubtedly best reflected the creative and generous climate that then reigned. In this process cinema played an important role.

The people involved in the production and, to a great extent, in the consumption of Cinema Novo were young people who disassociated themselves from their origins as colonizers. Their aspiration was to be at the same time the lever of dislocation and one of the new axes around which our history would begin to revolve. They saw themselves as representatives of the colonized, charged with a mediating function in the reaching of social equilibrium. In reality they were speaking and acting primarily for themselves. These limitations were clear in Cinema Novo. The social homogeneity between those responsible for the films and their public was never broken. The spectators of the *chanchadas* or *cangaceiro* films were barely reached and no new potential public was developed. Nevertheless, the significance of Cinema Novo was immense: it reflected and created a continuous and coherent audio-visual image of the absolute majority of the Brazilian people. Cinema Novo created a mythical universe made up of the impoverished interior, urban slums, lower class suburbs, fishing villages, dance halls, and the soccer stadium. Just as this model universe was

expanding, the process was interrupted in 1964. Cinema Novo did not die easily, however, and in the phase that led up to the Fifth Institutional Act it turned toward itself and its public, as if trying to understand its suddenly revealed weakness, in a perplexed reflection on their own failure, often accompanied by notes about the terror of torture or fantasies of guerrilla warfare. It never achieved the desired identification with the Brazilian social organism, but it remained to the end an accurate barometer of young people aspiring to interpret the will of the colonized.

When Cinema Novo disintegrated, its principal participants, now without a public, were dispersed in individual careers according to their personal temperament and taste. None of them, however, became as pessimistic as might have been expected, given the agony of their cinema. The line of desperation was represented by a current frontally opposed to Cinema Novo that called itself, at least in São Paulo, *Cinema do Lixo* ("Garbage Cinema"). The new movement began toward the end of the sixties and lasted approximately three years. The twenty or so films produced had, with rare exceptions, a clandestine existence partially by choice and partially because of the customary obstacles of commerce and censorship. Most of the participants of the *Lixo* movement received training with Cinema Novo. These filmmakers, in other circumstances, could have prolonged and rejuvenated Cinema Novo, whose universe and themes they in part adopted, but that they express in terms of degradation, sarcasm, and a cruelty that becomes almost unbearable in their best works due to the neutral indifference of their approach. A heterogeneous conglomerate of the nervous artists, the *Lixo* movement proposes an anarchistic culture and tends to transform the populace into rabble, the colonized into trash. This degraded subworld, traversed by grotesque processions, condemned to the absurd, mutilated by crime, sex, and exploitation, hopeless and fallacious, is, however, animated and redeemed by its inarticulate wrath. The *Lixo* movement managed, before embarking on its suicidal vocation, to produce a human image unique in national cinema. Isolated in clandestine showings, this last current of cinematic rebellion constitutes a kind of graph of the desperation of youth in the last five years.

It was not only *Cinema Lixo* that acutely expressed the preoccupations of the period. A documentary movement with cultural and didactic intentions reassumed, with a higher level of awareness and accomplishment, the earlier revelatory function of the genre. Focusing on the anachronistic forms of life in the northeast, it constituted a prolongation of Cinema Novo's perspective, patiently documenting the intrinsic nobility and competence of the colonized. Turning toward the

cangaceiro, this cinema evoked his existence with a depth of which even our best fiction was incapable.

Each film expresses its epoch. Much contemporary production cheerfully participates in the current stage of our development: the Brazilian economic miracle. Despite their lack of interest in our cinema, the owners of the world find means of transmitting their euphoria in our films. This euphoria is manifest especially in light comedies and trivial dramas, situated, almost invariably, in the colorful and luxurious wrappings of prosperity. The style resembles that of commercial documentaries, adorned with photogenic images of the colonized and with the lovable sway of women's hips on the "in" beaches, exuding affluence and flattering military and civilian authorities. The eroticism of these films, despite their hurried, inefficient vulgarity, their self-destructive obsession with breasts and buttocks, is, in fact, what is most truthful about them, particularly when they describe the sexual obsessions of the adolescent. At any rate, these films constitute but a part of the approximately 100 Brazilian films produced annually within the usual web of obstacles maintained by the metropolis.

The range of our cinema today confirms its vocation of expressing the complex reality of our culture. While the *chanchada* and the melodrama have largely been absorbed by television, the *caipira* film retains its vigor. Small cities nourish dramas and comedies associated with country singers as well as diverse sentimental films that pass almost unperceived in the large cities. The current crop of rural adventure stories derived from the *cangaceiro* film is seen exclusively in the interior and occasionally in the smaller capitals. A public difficult to define or to precisely locate assures the continuity of psychological dramas that mirror the crisis in the middle-class family. The figure of the colonizer is not embodied only through the lewdness of erotic comedies. Historical films, whether pompous superproductions or exemplary intellectual and artistic efforts, serve useful functions: the first type furnishes a succession of conventional colored lithographs of an official version of history, while the second type stimulates critical reflection about that history. Public authorities benevolently encourage the first type and distance themselves from the second.

Paternalist legislation, designed to counteract foreign domination of the market, has important economic consequences, but the frequent governmental hostility toward our best films forces their authors to seek financing in the same cultural metropolises where Cinema Novo first acquired its prestige, thanks in part to the First World's fascination with the Third World. The best of our cinema still derives from Cinema Novo. The rupture of the creative process in which they were involved some time ago impeded any kind of collective maturing. The

ideological and artistic individualism that began in 1968 dislocated the axis of creativity. Individual crisis replaced social crisis, permitting middle-aged filmmakers a new beginning. Old beliefs were fractured by private gods and devils, but the dust of collective construction dreamed of by all continued to be fertile. The work of the greatest figures that Brazilian cinema has yet known is far from complete; their films are still being woven before our eyes, and it would be premature to try and approach them objectively. Friendship had an important role in Cinema Novo, and the permanence of the comradeship born in the golden age of the movement would seem to indicate a persistent vision whose new face has yet to be revealed. The nostalgia that reigns in the best current Brazilian films reflects, possibly, a feeling of national remorse coalescing around the Indian, a reaction to the holocaust provoked by the original colonizer. Once again, what is best in Brazilian cinema nourishes an identification with the oppressed and maintains a critical distance from the oppressor.

Notes

1. Although Salles Gomes uses the terms "occupier" and "occupied" rather than "colonizer" and "colonized," the latter term strikes [the editors] as a more familiar rendering of his conception.

2. Candango refers to the workers who constructed Brasília; *baiano* is pejoratively used in the south to refer to immigrants from the northeast.

Cinema Novo

Carlos Diegues

Cinema Novo has no birthdate. It has no historic manifesto and no week of commemoration. It was created by no one in particular and is not the brainchild of any group. It has no official theoreticians, no popes or idols, no masters or guiding lights. Cinema Novo is not *novo* merely because of the youth of its practitioners. Nor does *novo*, in this context, suggest novelty or modishness. Cinema Novo is only part of a larger process transforming Brazilian society and reaching, at long last, the cinema.

In the beginning there were Humberto Mauro, Mário Peixoto, Adhemar Gonzaga, and other pioneers of our cinema. Despite obstacles, they left a body of work. Humberto Mauro, for example, remains an important model for anyone making films in Brazil. Then came the *chanchadas*, mid-year comedies or carnivalesque celebrations. A specifically Brazilian genre, it offered some valid alternatives, but, at the same time, was defiled by bad taste and by the most sordid commercialism, representing, finally, a form of cultural prostitution. Then Vera Cruz was founded, a bizarre structureless monster, without roots in our culture, nourishing itself on the dream of a European cinema in an illiterate and impoverished Brazil. Its failure was both financial and cultural. In its wake, the *chanchada* once again dominated Brazilian production, with "serious" cinema—sometimes cerebral and often ridiculously pretentious—running a very distant second.

Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, *Brazilian Cinema*. East Brunswick, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1982, pp. 64–67. By permission of the publisher.

At the same time foreign producers, distributors, and the exhibitors allied to them (and who were at times the same people) continued to dominate the market. Co-productions, invented as a kind of salvation for Brazilian cinema, resulted only in an absurd cost increase for *all* cinematic production in Brazil. There were also experiments with protectionist laws, and the state timidly turned its attention to the small, independent producer.

The independent producer arrived just in time. He became angry, stuck out his chest, closed his eyes, opened his hands, and threw his scanty resources into the cinematic adventure. He discovered miraculous ways of creating adequate technical conditions, begged for raw film stock, contracted capable people (discovering that Brazil was very well supplied in terms of excellent and inexpensive talent), outwitted the distribution mafia, exhibited his films, and made just enough money to be able to make more films. Gradually, the independent producer began not only to share his experience with others, but also to incorporate, with the same drive and audacity, the ideas of others. Soon, independent producers took on considerable importance.

Low-budget productions, while lowering the technical level of films, nevertheless offered the conditions—in conjunction with a policy of freedom of creation, invention, and treatment—for the emergence of Cinema Novo.

Brazil and its people became the central preoccupation of the new group of Brazilian filmmakers. They avoided both the touristic and picturesque attitudes that characterized co-productions and the cultural alienation inherent in an enterprise like Vera Cruz. Their goal was to study in depth the social relations of each city and region as a way of critically exposing, as if in miniature, the socio-cultural structure of the country as a whole. To take the people as theme, to give human form to fundamental conflicts, to make the people the center and master of the cinematic instrument. A critic from São Paulo, taking this option to its logical conclusion, exploded: "We don't want to make films. We want to hear the voice of Man." And the human voice will have to be heard in the northeast, in the southern latifundia, in Rio's *favelas*, in São Paulo's factories, and on the beaches of the fishermen of Bahia, indeed in all that is authentic and experiential.

Cinema Novo is a committed cinema, a critical cinema, even when, because of the youth and inexperience of its members, this commitment and this critical attitude become somewhat naive and lacking in analytical focus. But even this naiveté is valid, for Cinema Novo is, above all, freedom.

Freedom of invention, freedom of expression. Because Cinema Novo is not a school, it has no established style. On the contrary, a

unanimous style makes a movement retrograde, bourgeois, frivolous, manifested merely, or at least most intensely, in the formal, artisan aspect of its expression. In Cinema Novo, expressive forms are necessarily personal and original without formal dogmas, because form is merely one of the terms of a totality of simultaneous instruments directed toward the communication of a truth.

Without wasting time on the relative merits of close versus long shots, without worrying about whether the specifically filmic resides in the camera or in editing, without slothful theorizing, but rather technically rationalizing the practical questions of cinema, Brazilian filmmakers (principally in Rio, Bahia, and São Paulo) have taken their cameras and gone out into the streets, the country, and the beaches in search of the Brazilian people, the peasant, the worker, the fisherman, the slum dweller. Many have already presented the results of their work, but the great majority will release their first films this year.

1962 will doubtless be a key year for national cinema, the year of Cinema Novo. In Bahia, *A Grande Feira* (*The Big Market*), by Roberto Pires, has already been released. The same director is now preparing *Tocaia no Asfalto* (*Asphalt Ambush*). Glauber Rocha is ready to exhibit *Barravento* and is preparing a film about peasants in the state of Rio along with Paulo César Saraceni. Rex Schindler, producing these Bahian films, will probably soon direct a script of his own. Nelson Pereira dos Santos is preparing *Barren Lives* in the northeast. In Rio, Guerra's *Os Cafajestes* has already reached the theaters. *Assalto ao Trem Pagador* (*Assault on the Pay Train*), by Roberto Farias, and *Cinco Vezes Favela*, by five young directors (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Marcos Farias, Miguel Borges, Carlos Diegues, and Leon Hirszman) are being readied for distribution. In São Paulo Roberto Santos is finishing his adaptation of Guimarães Rosa's *Matraga*. And there are many other projects either in preparation or in production. Cinema Novo is also defending itself with short films, a recent phenomenon in Brazilian cinema that contributes, for its part, to the training of filmmakers: Linduarte Noronha, Orlando Senna, Glauber Rocha, Paulo César Saraceni, Rex Schindler, Mário Carneiro, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Sérgio Ricardo, Paulo Huchmacher, Marcos Farias, David Neves, Affonso Henriques, and many others. Unfortunately, these shorts will probably not have commercial distribution.

Thus Cinema Novo is being created with spirit and invention and without official policies, cliques, or snobbery. Turned toward Brazil and its people, Cinema Novo is ready to take the streetcar of national cinema that has been off track for too many years.

History of Cinema Novo

Glauber Rocha

There is nobody in this world dominated by technology who has not been influenced by the cinema. Even without ever having been to the cinema, man is influenced by it. National cultures generally have not been unaffected by a certain way of doing things, a certain sort of morality, and, above all, a tendency towards the fantastic, all supplied by the cinema of the imagination.

When one talks of cinema, one talks of *American* cinema. The influence of cinema is *the influence of American cinema*, which is the most aggressive and widespread aspect of American culture throughout the world. And this influence has so affected the American public itself, that, despite its conditioning, that public demands that the cinema furnish an image in its own likeness.

For this reason, every discussion of cinema made outside Hollywood must begin with Hollywood, especially as far as Brazilian cinema is concerned. Being economically and culturally much closer to the United States than to Europe, our public has created an image of life through the American cinema. Therefore when a Brazilian decides to make a film, he decides to make an "American-type" movie, and it is essentially because of this that the Brazilian audience expects a Brazilian film to be an "American-type" Brazilian movie. If a film is not American, simply because it is Brazilian, he is disappointed. The audience does not accept the Brazilian filmmakers' image of Brazil because this image does not coincide with the one of a technically developed and morally ideal world supplied by Hollywood movies.

Framework, No. 12, 1979, pp. 19–27. By permission of the publisher.

Thus it is not difficult to see which Brazilian films enjoy popular acclaim: they are those which, while dealing with national themes, do so by making use of a technique and an art which imitates the Americans. Two obvious examples are *O Cangaceiro* by Lima Barreto, and *O Assalto ao Trem Pagador* by Roberto Farias.

The plot of *O Cangaceiro* is taken from American Westerns and transposed to a setting of the "cangaço." To do this, it hacks out all aspects of the social life of the "sertão" (a zone of the Brazilian interior) and, following the traditions of the Western, only makes use of that imagery which is a part of those traditions: long hair, aggressive landscapes, fire-arms, horses (even when, as is well known, the cangaceiros rarely went on horseback) music and folk dances. The plot, as will be remembered, divided the four men into goodies and baddies. When Teodoro escapes with the young schoolma'am, the story follows, step by step, the classic scheme of many Westerns. The action is divided between the pursued goodies and the baddie pursuers. In the final scene, the schoolma'am, pure good itself, is saved. Teodoro, who had previously been bad, has no possibility of becoming good and dies heroically. He dies, however, with an act of nationalistic fervor, kissing the earth. The film's technique is provided by American models. At no time does the camera stop to analyze a character.

As can be seen, this *realism* is completely *unreal*. The illusion of the world of the cangaço is created in terms identical to those of the illusion of the world of Texan outlaws. Brought up on hundreds of "cowboy" films, the public need make no effort to understand the film, which is offered to it as a rich imitation of what the public's deformed taste expects.

Satisfied that this imitation is possible, the audience will naturally react against any film whatsoever, which wanting to show that Brazil is not the United States, proposes a different sort of conflict, and consequently uses a different sort of language.

In the context of the detective genre, *O Assalto ao Trem Pagador* repeats several elements which go to imitate the American "gangster" movie. Since, however, the detective genre is much more realistic than that of the Western, and for this very reason carries a bigger dose of social statement, Roberto Farias' film achieves a distinctive cultural level. It does not, all the same, avoid making use of the techniques of "suspense" which are fundamental to the genre.

The same Roberto Farias decided, in another film, to confront a social question. Making *Selva Tragica*, he tried with great effort to free himself from American formulae by broaching the problem of slavery in the farming of "maté" in Central Brazil. He ceased dividing society into goodies and baddies and sought to carry out a more profound

analysis. By penetrating a complex structure and attempting to articulate a language which suited this structure, Roberto made a film which was regarded at that time (1964) as disconnected. The lack of connection of this film, however, was much more realistic and national than the closed and predetermined formula adopted for *O Assalto ao Trem Pagador*.

The public's rejection of this film made Roberto Farias realize that his ability to communicate to them was not linked to his talent as director, but to the use to which he could put his talent in the service of a determined theme. And so the director once more resorted to the theme of the City and morality, with a vision of the middle classes' attitude toward the bourgeoisie, in the film *Todo Donzela Tem Um Pai Que E'Uma Fera*. He confirmed the notion whereby the formula for success consists in applying the American narrative form to a theme which is socially and morally false.

The welcome accorded internationally to *Selva Tragica* by the critics and the arts cinema circuit created a dilemma for Roberto Farias, however the artisan director finally succeeded in overshadowing the auteur director; hence his latest film *Roberto Carlos em Ritmo de Aventura* represents a Brazilian concoction of American formulae, and it seems destined to become our biggest box-office hit.

The Challenge

But by exploiting alienation in this way, will Roberto Farias really succeed in *conquering* this public? Does giving to the public what it *wants* represent a form of conquest, or rather a form of commercial exploitation of the a-cultural conditioning of this public? Is it not, perhaps, in *Selva Tragica* that the true path resides, the path which leads to the conquest of the spectator?

Roberto would undoubtedly answer that the cinema is an industry and that Brazil needs a film industry which might later give him the chance of creating an original cinema concerned with the country's problems.

But how to create a national film industry? The cinema is an industry which generates culture. American cinema has created a taste for itself, and if Brazilian cinema, in order to develop, wants to follow the easiest path, all it has to do is make use of American formulae. But in doing so, Brazil's industrial cinema will be nothing more than the propagator of a greater force, that of the dominant culture. This culture might just as easily be French or Russian or Belgian—it would make no difference; but in an underdeveloped country, it *does* make a

difference whether or not the society can obtain a practice generated out of the conditions of its own specific social and economic structure.

The first challenge is to propose to the Brazilian filmmaker how to conquer the public without making use of American formulae which, already today, have spread into European sub-forms. Is it worth forcing oneself to make a cinema which would pass on neither the bad nor the good to the specific culture of the society to which it belongs? This "impasse," which reflects the modern conception of the underdeveloped societies of the tropical countries, has a two-sided and conflicting moral repercussion: on the filmmaker who "produces the imitation," to his obvious discredit, and on the public which "rejects the original effort" with manifest annoyance.

For the public, however, the undertaking is more arduous, because it is unaware of the process of creating an original cinema in opposition to an imitative cinema which more easily satisfies the concept of perfection demanded by the spectator. It is more difficult for an original cinema to reach perfection since, being new, it is imperfect and thus less well-received by the public which, by consenting to an imitative cinema, tends to stimulate imitation.

Out of the concept of imitative cinema and original cinema emerged in Brazil the term "Cinema Novo." But having chosen to confront the Brazilian reality, "Cinema Novo" gives rise to a second challenge: having rejected the language of imitation, what then will be the original form employed?

'No' to Populism

Cinema, inserted into a cultural process, will need to be, in the final analysis, the language of a society. But of which society? A country "em transe," Brazil is an Indianist country / Vainglorious, Romanticist / Abolitionist, Symbolist / Naturalist, Realist / Parnassian, Republican / Positivist, Anarchist / Cannibal, Nationalpopular / Reformist, Concretist / Underdeveloped, Revolutionary / Conformist, Tropical / Structuralist, etc. An awareness of the oscillations of our culture so packed with superstructures (given that I am referring to an art produced by elites, very different from the "popular art produced by the people") is not sufficient to provide an awareness of who we are. Who are we? What sort of cinema do we have?

The public cannot be bothered with all this—it goes to the cinema to be entertained but all of a sudden discovers that it is watching a national film which demands an enormous effort to establish a dialogue with the filmmaker who, in turn, is making an effort to talk to the public . . . in a new language!

The discussions on the topic of this language are involved and revealing. By rejecting imitative cinema and choosing a different form of expression, Cinema Novo has also rejected the easiest path represented by the usual new language of so-called nationalist art, "populism," reflected in a typical political position adopted by us. Like the "caudilho," the artist feels himself father of the people: the order of the day is "speak simply so that the people understand."

My feeling is that "to create simple things for a simple people" shows a lack of respect for the public, however underdeveloped this public may be. The people may be diseased, starving and illiterate, they are not simple, they are complicated. The paternalistic artists idealizes popular types as subjects of fantasy who, even in their poverty, possess a philosophy and poor creatures, only have to get a bit of "political consciousness" in order, from one day to the next, to be able to invert the historical process.

The primitiveness of this concept is still more pernicious in its effect than imitative art, since imitative art has the courage, at least, to know itself to imitate and to justify the "industry of artistic taste" by putting forward, as its aim, gain.

Populist art, on the other hand, seeks to justify its primitiveness with a "clear conscience." The populist artist is always declaring, "I am not an intellectual, I run with the people, my art is beautiful because it communicates," etc. It communicates to the people their own illiteracy, their own vulgarity, born out of their state of poverty which leads them to despise the way they live.

The Brazilian people, while accepting their poverty, are always critical of it. One finds in popular music a great many "samba" which say, "I've got no beans, I make soup out of stones" and "I'll die on the sidewalk, but smiling all the while" or "the 'favela' is the entry to paradise." Populism draws from these sources and serves them back to the people, ungarnished by any deeper interpretations. The people, seeing how the art clothes itself in the primitive comicalness of underdevelopment, find their misfortune hilarious and die laughing.

Thus is explained the success of the "chanchada," based on the pretty poverty of the "caboclo," or the middle class. Thence is derived the success of any drama containing social statement. The populist will also defend the idea according to which "the forms of communication should be used . . . to unalienate." But these "forms of communication" as we have already seen are the colonizing culture's instruments of alienation.

An underdeveloped country is not necessarily obliged to have underdeveloped arts. It is ingenuous and in some ways reactionary to think that art offends. Sharing the general malaise of Brazilian culture,

Cinema Novo has rejected populism thus reducing the possibility for it to manoeuvre the public. Could it have chosen the way of subterfuge?

While they spend so much time considering the problem of communication, Cinema Novo considers the problem of creating. Are creation and the cinematographer reconcilable? The majority of observers reply that cinema is, and can only be, the art of communication. For these observers, *creating* is opposed to *communicating*. The apostles of communication will avoid at any cost, however, asking themselves this: on how many levels is communication produced, and, more than this, what is real communication?

Cinema Novo claims to have been successful in attaining real communication. Stating this, it frees itself from the certainty of the communication propounded by "populism," which is a misleading boast because, deep down, populism hardly cultivates the "cultural values" of an underdeveloped society at all. These "values" are worthless—our culture, a product of a lack of ability at the level of artisanal skills, of laziness, of illiteracy, and of impotent politics, of social stagnation, is a "Culture Year Zero." So burn down the libraries!

With every film, Cinema Novo, like the Lumière, starts from zero. When filmmakers organize themselves to start from zero, to create a cinema with new types of plot lines, of performance, of rhythm, and with a different poetry, they throw themselves into the dangerous revolutionary adventure, of *learning while you produce*, of placing side by side theory and practice, of reformulating every theory through every practice, of conducting themselves according to the apt dictum coined by Nelson Pereira dos Santos from some Portuguese poet: "Don't know where I'm going, but I know I'm not going over there."

The public feels itself propelled into the theaters. It feels obliged to read a new genre of cinema: technically imperfect, dramatically dissonant, poetically rebellious, sociologically imprecise just as the official Brazilian sociology is itself imprecise, politically aggressive and insecure, just as the political avant-garde in Brazil is itself violent and sad, rather more sad than violent, like our Carnival which is much more sad than gay.

For us, new does not mean *perfect*, since the notion of perfection is a concept inherited from the colonizing cultures which have determined their concept of *perfection* to take up the interests of a *political ideal*.

Modern art which is truly revolutionary in its ethics and aesthetics is opposed, through its language, to a dominating language. If the sum of guilt felt by bourgeois artists leads them to be opposed to their own world, in the name of that awareness which the people need but do not have, the only way out is to oppose through the impure aggressiveness of true modern art all the moral and aesthetic hypocrisy that lead the artists into alienation.

Thus the Cinema Novo's ambition comes to be considered as something over and above the cinema. The cinema, everybody says, is a form of entertainment. Those who go to the cinema, go to enjoy themselves. Nobody wants to have to face problems at the cinema. Art is the territory of the theater, of painting, of poetry. Cinema, on the other hand, costs money. The filmmaker artist is an irresponsible, a cretin, or else an intellectual.

In Brazil, intellectual is synonymous with homosexual. So you need a lot of courage to be an intellectual and, as an intellectual, attack the power of the cinema. I think that Brazil is a country which desperately needs the cinema and, above all, that the cinema will be the art of Brazil par excellence. Rome, however, was not built in a day, and Cinema Novo only began in 1962 and, to date, has produced a mere 32 films.

The Distribution System

Because cinema is a business, the secret lies in the distribution. Once the film is ready, the producer needs to sell it, but before it gets to the exhibitor, it must first pass through the hands of an intermediary, the distributor, who pays only for the drawing up of contracts and the organization. The publicity costs are divided into three, but the proportion for which the producer is responsible runs to 80%. The exhibitor takes 50% of the gross earnings, the producers between 35-40% (paying 80% of the publicity costs), while the distributor takes between 10-15% having to lay out only the minimum necessary. But it is the distributor who bills the exhibitor and thus manages the producer's capital outlay.

It is usual for the producer, on completion of a film, to find himself penniless. So . . . he goes to the distributor for help. Usually, the distributor will give him an advance, but the money lent is deducted at source from the first returns, so that the producer, who gives up the initial income to the distributor, must pay off the bank with the subsequent returns . . . always smaller than the first.

The Brazilian cinema went through this for years. When some São Paulo capitalists organized the large scale *Vera Cruz* film venture, they saw to everything apart from the distribution which was entrusted to Columbia Pictures. Columbia organized distribution, but with less publicity and commercial drive than was usual for their own films.

In that "age of Titans" the theorists of São Paulo (the same ones, who, today, are to be found at the National Institute of Cinema) believed that the cinema of "studios," stars, wardrobe managers, floodlights, astronomical salaries, Italian directors, was an ideal cinema. After eighteen years, Vera Cruz collapsed. Not even the success obtained by *O Cangaceiro*, could prevent this cinematographic empire from crumbling. Were the backers to blame? I don't think so, it was the fault of ad-hoc producers, imported directors, irresponsible actors, and of idealists who hoodwinked the São Paulo bourgeoisie by declaring that art costs money and that, thanks to art, even with a small market, São Paulo would have acquired an industry that could rival the United States.

Distribution, we should add, can perform no miracle to make the public enjoy a bad film or to enable them to understand a good art film. But distribution can, via intelligent and persistent programming, and via efficient control, market a film throughout the Brazilian territory and stand a very good chance to recover production/distribution costs and even make a profit. By consolidating and extending the distribution network in Brazil one would, at a conservative estimate, create a 35 percent increase in the earning potential of films in black and white that do not exceed the average budget of 150,000 cruzeiros. Thus, even if a film is "unsuccessful" it can still pay for itself by means of what we call minimal "natural" returns.

The Heart of the Cinema

It is at this point that distribution becomes the heart of the cinema. A well-organized distributor can create a public for a particular type of product. The best example of this is provided by the birth of the Art Cinema market, which has come to be a worldwide phenomenon. As the public was absorbed into the television, the cinema market made inroads into that part of the public which expected something greater from the cinema. Thus arose the Art Cinema market, which is constantly growing and now threatens to compete with the major cinematographic market.

The most courageous exhibitors realized that the only way to attract the spectator, generally attached to the television, was to summon him to see "art" in his theaters. And so was established a business that came to be called the "Old Business" of . . . art. In this market, the French Nouvelle Vogue, Fellini and Antonioni, Ingmar Bergman, Luis Buñuel, and many other old and young directors, established themselves. In the way Art Cinema was presented, one tended to read the name of the director in the place of that of the actors. And with the exception of three or four, the work of very few American directors was being shown in these cinemas.

Thus the auteur, and with him the Art Cinema, emerged. And we thus conclude without much effort that Cinema Novo's struggle with the public is not a regional but a universal struggle. This struggle has the dimensions of a cultural revolution, with all the risks that any revolution involves.

In 1964, Luis Carlos Barreto became aware of this phenomenon and, with great difficulty, managed to convince the producer-directors of Cinema Novo that it would only be possible to propose an original language through the direct control of the market. He further proposed that the films would take a long time to modify the public's moral and artistic conceptions. To do this, he added, the films would need to be supported by a self-sufficient distribution structure that could distribute this sort of product in a planned way. Thus Difilm emerged which today competes on an equal footing with the other distributors in Brazil.

The increase in receipts has been fast, and the public attendances at Cinema Novo film jumped by 40% between 1964 and today. Each Cinema Novo film, thanks to efficient distribution, is seen by an average of 50,000 to 100,000 people, in Rio de Janeiro alone. A transitional film like *Todas as Mulheres do Mundo*, which betrays a spontaneous, if somewhat unrigorous maker, has been seen by about 40,000 people.

Today Difilm has fifteen films in distribution and this year will add another ten titles. Without much effort, the profit on the gross income would be about 10% to 15%, automatically re-invested in the concern's organization and in film production. This profit margin has enabled the co-production of nearly ten films. The company has also started to export its films, through agents in Paris and Buenos Aires, which are the centers for international distribution.

The majority of Cinema Novo's films being accepted into the Art Cinema's circuits abroad, beyond constituting a supplementary market which nurtures big perspectives, have vested Cinema Novo with a prestige that enables it to confront pressures from all sides.

It is an undeniable fact that an artistic language cannot consolidate itself in the abstract, that is to say that without economic power, there cannot be cultural power. Difilm has managed to insert itself into the system by acknowledging the system's objective reality, that of *business*, and can thus sell a subjective product, that is . . . art. What is more, the growth of the art cinema market represents an increasing need felt by the public, to be informed about, and to be able to discuss, its own destiny. This need mirrors the mobilization, though still

slow, of a real Brazilian culture, to which our avant-garde in the universities contributes, along with the publishing movement, popular music, the new theater, literature, the new press . . . and Cinema Novo. Cinema Novo is inserting itself into our society as an agent which, by participating in the creation of quality products, is striving for a form of expression, different from and more effective than that of American cinema.

All the same, the question, which is an important one, remains unanswered: what is this cinematographic language I have defended, which I have differentiated from the others without having so far defined?

The Hero Without Character

Mario de Andrade, the theoretician and creator of great importance in the 1922 Modern Art Movement, wrote a book *Macunaíma, The Hero Without Character* which, like *Os Sertoes*, is fundamental with regard to knowledge and understanding of Brazil. Joaquim Pedre de Andrade is currently involved in preparing the adaptation of the book, which will have the title *O Heroi de Mau Carater(The Hero of Bad Character)*. Beginning with the concept of "hero," we shall attempt to analyze, in the most objective way possible, what the *language of Cinema Novo* is.

The hero is an exceptional character which any novelist, playwright or filmmaker chooses for his drama. Even the typical hero, that is to say one who embodies and expresses a social group, is transformed when he is syntheticized, into something exceptional. A drama without heroes would be a drama without men. Using cleverly the key characters of the nineteenth century novel and play, the American cinema created heroes who corresponded to the cinema's vision, violent and humanitarian at the same time, of the "world of progress." Handsome, strong, honest, sentimental and implacable men. Independent, maternal, loving, sincere and understanding women.

American producers have always made films which were adapted to the needs of the moment. Only a small number of the films have ever obtained critical penetration which, however, never went outside the sphere of social statement. Even courageous and topical subjects, as in John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, could be submitted to fantastic changes: John Ford, a great technician gifted with a sense of humor, transformed the political theme of the book into the social-sentimental theme of the film.

The example of *The Grapes of Wrath* helps one to see that the most important thing about a film is never the story but always the mise-en-scène. One of the main errors committed by the public and the critics is that of considering the *story* to be *the basis of the film*. In cinema, the story is only one element in the mise-en-scene. The director, the man who has the job of creating a world of images, makes use of the story, actors, photography, technical effects, rhythm, landscape, dialogue and titles to realize his work. And he will never create his work from the vision of the writer, but from his own.

To understand a film properly, the spectator must look, at the same time, at the landscape, the tonality of the photography, the interpretation of the actors; he must listen properly to the dialogue and the score and must read properly the titles; he must observe the camera movements; finally he must be properly aware of when the actor's face alone is shown in a closeup, or when the actor is shown full-frame, alone in the landscape, or else in the company of others.

In classic American cinema, in *The Grapes of Wrath* for example, everything was conceived so as not to create conflict for the spectator. The director sought to break everything, down to the smallest particular, into little pieces. Into these he inserted his ideology and served up the whole all ready for the spectator to swallow. The public goes to see the film and can understand it without having to think. It comes out of the cinema satisfied because, really, it has nothing in common with what it has seen. It feels only the stimulus which enables it to obtain some of the physical attributes of the hero or the heroine: beauty, will-power, courage, integrity and victory. Because life offers none of these things to it, the public takes refuge in the cinema.

A French critic once told me how much he liked Metro movies in color because, being so unhappy with reality, Metro, for him, was a new paradise.

Today the American cinema is full of self-doubt, just as American society itself is perplexed as never before. The death of Kennedy seems to have opened the gates to new questions, and today American commercial films no longer reflect on the old ideas of John Ford or Howard Hawks. At the moment in which the American character itself enters a crisis, it is only right that the idea of the hero changes. Thus emerges the anti-hero.

One Who Is Living the Crisis

The Brazilian filmmaker is interested in everything that happens in Brazil, in the world, in society and in the cinema. It is not possible to isolate art, still less the cinema—the filmmaker is a man who is constantly moving. He goes from the corridors of banks to the labyrinths of laboratories, from the sophisticated world of actors, to the violent

world of renters, from luxury appointments to the most distant corners of forests, and through this, if he has a grain of sensitivity, he will experience at close quarters a reality so complex as to make him constantly unsure of the world in which he lives.

For this reason, our hero must be the *multiplex Brazilian man* who is living every crisis where it occurs. The instability of this active and reflexive character cannot be found in our cinema, but may be encountered in our country's novels and plays, and is bound to that same consciousness which our writers have of reality. And we cannot ignore the precariousness of a concept of realism. In a *revealed*, developed society, it is a lot easier to conceive of and practice a dramatic realism than, as we have already seen, it is in a society which lacks any information. Our filmmaker takes part in the discovery of the consciousness of what is Brazilian, through his wish to record via direct images, and his wish to discuss in the light of what he knows (or thinks he knows) of man, ourselves and others.

Vidas Secas, the film made by Nelson Pereira dos Santos in 1963, taken from the novel by Graciliano Ramos, did not have any popular success even though it was a work rich in cultural polemics. Fabiano, the protagonist, is a "retirante" (a man who emigrates from the arid regions in the North East of Brazil, to escape the drought); he is a weakling, timid, ugly and starving; he is not a coward, but he is led by his fear of an unknown political power which oppresses him, to consider his honor, which lacks any idea of revenge, to be the compensation for his humiliation.

For *Vidas Secas*, Luis Barreto developed direct camerawork. He tried to sing of the suns of the North East, of its effect on the landscape and on the men. The scorched characters, at the beginning, move across the vast flat "caatinga."[1] Already, at the first shot, a new cinema is proposed. For four minutes, we contemplate the same image. We see the characters in long shot, slowly getting nearer the audience. They are led by a dog called Balaia (Whale). As a background there is the sad creaking of the bullock cart, the sound growing louder without changing pitch.

The spectator who has made his way to the cinema to watch a drama about the drought is assailed by the opening scene which attempts to oblige him not to watch, but to participate in the tragedy of the drought. The whole film takes place in the same way: the white and dazzling shots follow on monotonously one from another, but with each shot revealing some new aspect of this world: parched world, parched lives. The spectator is made to think about what he sees, but this irritates him: if the hero himself, the spectator asks himself, does nothing to change the situation, if Fabiano merely confines himself to running away at the point when the drought threatens to kill him, then why should he, the spectator, bother about Fabiano, let alone get bored watching this good-for-nothing Fabiano on the screen?

The spectator can see that this film is different—he read in the newspapers that it had an artistic touch—but it does not hold up and, he complains, if it had at least been made in color, it would have been less sad.

A populist film would have shown Fabiano singing his "xaxado" (folk song) by the fire, creating a sub-literary genre around his little blade of grass; Fabiano, at the end, would have killed the Yellow Soldier. Sinha Vitoria, the grumpy sour woman, would have died, and Fabiano would have married the beautiful peasant girl after having received the bit of land allotted to him by the agrarian reform, where he would plant his vegetables next to the dike built by the Sudene (State Organization for the Irrigation of Northeast Brazil).

The spectator of *Vidas Secas* is not seeing a film which elicits his tame monkey's mentality to react in a predetermined way—he will refuse to follow the movement of the film as he must do, if he is to understand why Fabiano does not make the best of all possible worlds, that for Fabiano to change, he and the others must change the world, etc.

The protagonist irritates us. Nobody sympathizes with his fate, just as nobody sympathizes with ours. Lost and abandoned in the "sertao," or in the city, our destiny is in our own hands.

Vidas Secas is a film which is absolutely dramatic. Nelson Pereira dos Santos analyses through it an aspect of "sertaneja"[2] society; he tells the truth, but few people can see or hear it: has the director made a mistake?

In shooting *Os Fuzis (The Rifles)* Ruy Guerra has taken another position. He shows us a group of "retirantes" (this time a group of men like the Yellow Soldier who humiliated and beat up Fabiano). The soldiers have been called into the region to maintain order: they shoot any "flagelado" (drought victim) who tries to raid the food store. The soldiers are human beings, but they have a world of their own. For them the "flagelado" is an inferior being who, for some reason, has not managed to get out of his miserable state, probably because he is lazy. He, the soldier, has already had his revolution.

In a small town, they meet Gaucho, formerly a soldier, now a lorry driver. He is an adventurer, a sceptic, ready for anything. He is a man without moral values, who is fed up with their passivity, and capable of taking a gun to defend the "flagelados." He is shot down by the soldiers. Gaucho does not manage to pull it off quite like a Texan

sheriff, and the spectator goes against a film, which, in the final analysis, has offered him neither any solutions nor a story which is easy to follow.

Os Fuzis is quite a different sort of film from *Vidas Secas*, and presents us with a different aspect of the problem of the North East: the relationship between the forces of order and the suffering. To express all the aspects of this tragedy, it was a violent language.

For Ruy Guerra, the story is relatively unimportant—the spectator must dwell, as Ruy Guerra has done, on a lengthy shot which shows a "sertanejo" scratching the earth for a root to eat, or another where a soldier, thanks to the training which has deformed him, loads a rifle blindfold, and kills by reflex, without knowing who or why he is shooting.

In this exuberant natural setting where the action takes place, the spectator would like a cowboy film with its gradual and natural rhythm, spared the conflicts between man, landscape and social environment.

In *Deus o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, made around the same time, I took as starting point some popular legends to show still another aspect of the drama of the North East. Manuel, a down-and-out ox-driver, kills his boss and goes off with the boss's woman in search of truth, and finishes up by becoming the "cabra" (a hitman) for a cangaceiro. With the death of the cangaceiro, he loses faith in everything and goes mad, leaving his wife and running off to an imaginary sea to free himself.

This film, a cultural polemic like *Vidas Secas* and *Os Fuzis*, upset the public and failed to obtain the success which was hoped for. A young film-programmer told me that had Manuel joined up with Antonio das Mortes to kill cangaceiros and the "holy men," had he afterwards been rewarded by receiving a "fazenda" (land holding) from some rich colonel, then the film would have been a success. But to have changed the direction of Manuel's progress would have meant changing Manuel's very character, for he is weak, starving and perplexed, like Fabiano. Fabiano, because of his perplexity, gives up and stays. Manuel, in the same state of mind, keeps on going, along the paths indicated by a bloody mysticism, using up his energies through an abstract morality and a physical and spiritual purge.

So the protagonist's behavior, decided beforehand by the director and developed in the course of constructing the film, is directly linked to the technique of shooting. When the director tells the cameraman that he wants a close-up or a distance shot of the protagonist, or when he tells the leading actor to walk right or left, he does so because all

this has got to do with the protagonist, both objectively and subjectively.

A Moral Problem

But if the Brazilian hero is without character, lost and perplexed, without traditions or a future, how is he to be filmed? The instability of the technique adopted for shooting is linked to this fact. Never has Godard's idea, whereby a "camera movement is not a question of technique, but a moral question" been shown so clearly to be true, as in the case of Brazil. If so far the character of the Brazilian has not been successfully defined, if we reject the image of an absolute hero, it is because the search for our Man has been hampered by a great deal of mistakes.

The price of the search for truth is incomprehension on the part of the public. But by perfecting methods through the overcoming of mistakes, by building a greater awareness of reality, starting from that which we already know, we can forge the key to a language capable of circumscribing, analyzing, stating and demonstrating the truth. But all this lies outside of the cinema and is part of socio-political phenomenon. Cinema Novo is intimately tied to this phenomenon, and though it would rather be an agent of the process than a reflection of it, it is much more of a reflection than an agent. From this it can be seen, as with politics and economics, that Cinema Novo does not adhere any longer to traditional values. It does not define clearly our future and is not quite clear about what system it should be striving for. A country "em Transe," a cinema "em Transe."

Is it enough to propose this state of trance, induced by underdevelopment and life in the Tropics, to explain Brazilian cinema's isolation? This for me is the most important question, since the cinema must overcome the trance stage in order to reach a stage of lesser neurosis and greater effectiveness. The passage from cultural neurosis to cultural action will be the first act of the "show." At the moment, we are still in the overture, in which all the themes are orchestrated in such a way as to announce the melodies to follow.

Various other films, such as *O Desafio, O Padre e a Moca, A Falceida, Menino de Engenho*, and *A Opiniao Publica*, met with serious comprehension and communication problems. But in the case of each of these films, the makers threw themselves into the task of analyzing the darker aspects of our reality: these films, in short, showed the painful nature of our underdevelopment and, above all, dismantled the preconceptions of an old culture. The brave self-criticism in *O Desafio*, the rejection of traditions and underdevelopment in *O Padre e a*

Moca, the sadness expressed in *A Falecida* (a debut work of international value), did not manage to communicate themselves directly, but were relayed, at more complex levels, to the extent that these films became polemical works constituting a cultural statement.

Watching and Listening

In many studies of the problems of communication, one finds that the specialists do nothing other than describe the state of affairs brought about by imperialism. As propaganda, Socialism fails, and is publicized on the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution as the work of New York advertising agencies. . . .

The creators of the technology of treating the public as idiots are expanding their activities over the whole world. Articulating this structure is not difficult for the careful technician. The problem the Brazilian filmmaker sets himself is rather different: we know better than anybody the communication structure of the American cinema, from artistic techniques to the mechanics of distribution. We are all too familiar with the star system, the narrative devices, the attractions of the genres and publicity stunts: we know it all, the whole works.

But if we knew it, does this mean that, fascinated by its effectiveness, we should accept it? The attitude of certain groups of intellectuals has made a major contribution to our state of underdevelopment. They have decided to import theory upon theory from the developed world, without any disinfecting of the customs. Their theoretical schematization has generated a sub-art based on imitation. We were so preoccupied by what the developed world might think about us, that we forgot to worry about ourselves. Cinema Novo, on the other hand, only worries about itself, and only refers to what they say abroad in order to draw a comparison between foreign opinion and national incomprehension.

The fact that Cinema Novo is well received abroad in no way justifies the difficulty it has in getting accepted in Brazil. The fundamental problem, a problem of economic and cultural factors which are closely interrelated, lies with the public. In trying to deal with the essential aspects of our society, Cinema Novo, as we have seen, came up against a precarious cultural practice. So it tried to elaborate a cultural practice which was based on that precariousness. As Gustavo Dahl so felicitously expressed it, Cinema Novo is forcing itself to wreak qualitative change to overcome cultural underdevelopment, a project undertaken by certain other Brazilian artists, especially the 1922 movement.

Neither is familiarity with the technology of communication, nor participation in it, particularly important. What is important is to attack that technology and propose alternatives to it. The cinema in Brazil has one great advantage: in creating a structure for itself aimed at self-sufficiency, it benefits, with the exception of the struggle against the censors, from infinitely greater room to manoeuvre than the television has.

The real trial for the cinema is that, with a public hooked on foreign films and suffocated by television, communication is problematic. But it is not impossible to break through the barrier of general insensitivity. The immediate and partial failure of Cinema Novo with the public is partly due to the immaturity of the filmmakers who, flung into the abyss, without technical expertise or much experience, hit this barrier face on while making contradictory efforts to get through it.

But one thing has managed to break through this barrier of glass, something so important as to upset the monologue: Cinema Novo has turned itself into political parties, both legal and illegal, from solitary confinement. But contrary to what the critic Jean Claude Bernardet asserts in his book *Brazil em Tempo de Cinema* (Editrice Civilizacao Braslieira), Cinema Novo does not take advantage of the prestige accorded to it by the official culture, rather it holds that prestige in contempt, and this contempt makes itself felt on the screen, in those films which acquire prestige for the fact that they are *films*. If they are films, that is to say that they represent something concrete: a technical production which is a creative affirmation, one which acknowledges and defeats the challenge offered by the official culture itself, according to which "Brazilians have not the know-how to do cinema."

Most of the bodies who award prizes to Cinema Novo films do not understand these films, they respect them. The same thing happened in the case of literature. The drama of misunderstanding which the cinema is experiencing today is the same one modern art experienced in the 1930s. But this misunderstanding should not be seen as the doom of artistic life but as the product of the immature state or the national consciousness.

The Breaking-Point

The phase of pure discovery and intuition, which began in 1964 with Cinema Novo's first experiences, the films *Os Cafajestes*, *Barravento* and *Porto das Caizas*, has developed into the phase of reflection and a break with Cinema Novo's own roots, marked by this year's experiences which are bound to give rise to much polemic. Cinema Novo is looking for a language derived from socio-politico-economic factors,

in order to communicate to the public and influence it on its path of liberation. It has no intention of providing *the organization for a school,* in the sense so loved by the theoreticians who wait on God's salvation, but it does want to provide for a *proliferation of personal styles* which will put permanently in doubt the concept of a special language as a higher level of consciousness. From a cultural dynamic which is *self-destructive,* we could develop one of *dialectics.*

The avant-garde in the Third World, as the poet Ferreira Gullar used to tell me, is quite a different affair from the avant-garde of the developed world. The cinema has an advantage over literature, in so far as it has a medium at its disposal—the image—that has no need of translation.

The problem, though, is not one of deciding between the *national* and the *universal,* as some would have it. The problem is to create from the position of one's insufficiencies, and build out of the qualities of these the flexible foundations of a way of thinking which is in the process of evolving. Thereby we would have an international style of art: that of the avant-garde. Thus creation will be the only stimulus for the development of styles in the Third World.

Creation, I would stress, results from the tactics of production; is carried out through the "dialectically free" act of creating, and asserts itself in the strategy and tactics of distribution.

A cinema that wants to create and seeks cultural quality obtains, at various levels, political results. Although Cinema Novo lost the first round going into one or two clinches with the public, it has won on points, if not actually by a knock-out. The reality behind all this lies in the ever-improving professional organization on the part of the producers, which can be seen in the increase, both in quantity and quality, of the films in production.

The discussion will not stop there: *Garota de Ipanema,* dismissed by the critics and the intellectual elites who have always accused Cinema Novo of being anti-popular, is beating box-office records in Brazil, and only *Roberto Carlos em Ritmo de Aventura* will make more this year. But *Garota de Ipanema* has this great advantage over any other type of commercial production made in Brazil: it is a film which rejects imitation. It has opted for the solitude of an attempted critique of a world, that of Ipanema, mythicized by "sun and beer literature"; it has opted for the solitude of an attempt at criticism rather than conform to the lie which is inherent in that literature's language, rather than imitate Claude Lelouch and give a false impression of being like other films by means of sub-art.

Leon Hirszman's film displays the author's disbelief in his subject, a disbelief not found in *A Falecida.* Hirszman here saw himself as

being sacrificed on the Altar of Paradise by its priests, for denying the existence of a happy Atlantic seaboard society (might not a real good-humoredness exist in Ipanema, a poor part of the city, where a select few are washed away by their illusion of happiness?). This disbelief prevents the film from coming to grips with the other aspect of Ipanema, the inevitable aggressiveness. But Hirszman's *detachment* confers on the film a cultural value.

I think that the *demystification* phase will be surpassed in the coming films, but it will be by no means entirely absent. The filmmakers are convinced that the "critical eye" is not enough: another way of making an impact is necessary, one capable of shaking up the public as they sit in the stalls. *Terra em Transe* took a step in this direction and a bitter struggle was the result, a struggle which enabled a discussion to take place on many levels, thus opening up the way for new ways of communication. Certain left-wing critics labelled the film which encouraged a dialogue with the public. Didactic or raising an issue, aggressive or criticizing, agitating or organizing, demystifying or fabulous—Cinema Novo has realized that to be *realist* means *discussing the different aspects of the real,* and not employing some formula out of European Realism (Hail, Lukács!) in order to determine, *a priori,* a realism with a clear conscience.

For the most part, Brazilian criticism has not grasped this phenomenon, and only a few, such as Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes, Alex Viany, Ruda de Andrade, Almeida Salles, Walter da Silveira, Cosme Alves Neto, Fabiano Canosa, Wilson Cunha, Sergio Augusto and Mauricio Gomes Leito, have worked, as men of the cinema, for the discussion, defense, publicizing and recording of the history, of the phenomenon.

The other critical practice, the reactionary one, refuses to accept the obvious. In practice, it is working to undermine its own long-winded declarations on a national cinema, by proposing ideas that mystify and which were being put forward a long time ago by the audience and filmmakers whose practice was dominant.

The bureaucracy of the National Institute of Cinema does its good works, in the form of channelling 10% of box-office receipts throughout the country back to the producers. However it sows the seeds of the cinema's destruction in establishing a network of cultural sabotage against Cinema Novo. The composition of the juries, who give the prizes and who classify Brazilian films to be sent abroad, is openly biased against Cinema Novo, becoming even more radical when it fails to find films to put up against Cinema Novo's.

To the defeatists and denigrators, whilst acknowledging the shortcomings of Cinema Novo, I address the following questions:

What are the alternatives for Brazilian cinema, if there is a boycott of future films belonging to this tendency, and of those, made by their directors which are to be released this year?

Theories die if they are not put into practice. Cinema Novo exists; it is a creative response, an active practice, in a country so full of possibilities and misunderstandings.

It is not our intention, however, to turn Cinema Novo into a closed circle of filmmakers. Our struggle has as its aim the implanting of a mentality—Cinema Novo is for an assault on the power of the cinema; Cinema Novo is to make sure that Brazilian cinema really becomes a new cinema, one worthy of a new country (even if a premature decline might raise fears over the country's future). But the role of the intellectuals, whatever their approach, is to create and turn an adult culture into a source for popular inspiration. You do not, however, create an adult culture by using fear. If the choice is either to follow the cult of dubious traditions, or take the risk of making a discovery, Cinema Novo will soldier up the second path.

Translated by Jon Davis.

Notes

1. Area of scrub on the edge of the sertão.
2. Of the sertão.

Transformation of National Allegory

Brazilian Cinema from Dictatorship to Redemocratization

Robert Stam and Ismail Xavier

The Brazilian Cinema Novo movement was at its height when a military dictatorship seized power in 1964 and ruled Brazil for the next two decades, until power was officially transferred to a civilian government in March 1985. Our purpose here is to examine the impact of these twenty years of overtly authoritarian rule on Brazilian film, to examine the ways in which Brazilian cinema has reflected, refracted, and even "produced" this period of history. More specifically, we will examine Brazilian film history in terms of (1) the changing political context of the period; (2) the evolving nationalist discourse; (3) the refraction in the films of both "real" history and "discursive" history (the two being intimately linked), especially as reflected in films that constitute fragmentary texts projecting general statements about the Brazilian situation or destiny and thus qualify as what might be called "national allegories."

The Nature of Allegory

Brazilian intellectuals have been working with the concept of national allegory at least since the debates about "tropicalism" in the late 1960s, and arguably even since the debates about the national character conducted by "modernismo" in the 1920s.[1] Fredric Jameson, meanwhile, in a non-Brazilian context, argues in his essay "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" that all Third World

Robert Sklar and Charles Musser, eds. *Resisting Images: Essays on Cinema and History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990, pp. 279–307. By permission of the publisher.

texts are "necessarily allegorical," in that even those texts invested with an apparently private or libidinal dynamic "project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society."[2] Without endorsing the somewhat hasty totalization of all Third World texts as "necessarily" allegorical—it would be problematic to posit any single artistic strategy as uniquely appropriate to the cultural productions of an entity as heterogenous as the Third World—and without denying the analytical relevance of allegory for all national cinemas, including First World cinemas, we would like to demonstrate the special relevance for Brazilian cinema of the concept of allegory, here conceived in a broad sense as any kind of oblique or synecdochic utterance soliciting hermeneutic completion or deciphering.

In the period of our discussion, we can trace at least two major strands of allegory: first, the teleological Marxist-inflected meliorist allegories of early Cinema Novo, where history is revealed as the progressive unfolding of an immanent historical design, and second, the modernist self-deconstructing allegories of the Brazilian underground, where the focus shifts from the "figural" signification of the onward march of history to the discourse itself as fragmentary, and where allegory is deployed as a privileged instance of language-consciousness in the context of the felt loss of larger historical purpose. Such a discussion, we would argue, touches on a number of issues relevant to radical film and cultural historians—issues having to do with "legibility" and "communication" with a broader public, with realism versus anti-realism as radical strategies, with the struggle against censorship and repression, and with the complex relationship between the "left" and nationalism.

The majority of Brazilian films, even the most apparently frivolous, demonstrate a clear penchant for allegory. If we take allegory in the broad sense as implying the use of metaphoric, synecdochic, microcosmic, or temporally transposed discourses to encode cultural-political messages about the larger society, we can discern allegory even in the 1950s musical comedies (*chanchadas*), which, as Joao Luiz Vieira argues, parody Hollywood films in order to allegorize the "inferiority" of Brazilian cinema in relation to the dominant Hollywood model.[3] But this pervasive allegorical tendency becomes exacerbated, as we shall see, in the work of intellectual filmmakers profoundly shaped by nationalist and Third World discourse, who feel obliged, with every film, to speak for and about the nation as a whole.

The Question of the National

It is impossible to discuss Brazilian cinema in any depth without engaging the complex question of the "national." Because of Brazil's neo-colonized Third World status, its intellectuals—and the filmmakers we will discuss see themselves, and are seen as, intellectuals—have necessarily been concerned with the ramifications of nationalism. If Hollywood filmmakers have enjoyed the luxury of being "above" petty nationalist concerns, it is because they can take for granted the projection of a national power that facilitates the making and the dissemination of their films. In Brazil, in contrast, national power does not provide a quiet substratum of confidence; instead, national powerlessness generates a constant challenge, a Sisyphusian struggle to conquer an elusive "authenticity" to be constructed anew with every generation. The cultural and ideological environment in which Brazilian filmmakers operate forces them to juggle diverse concerns—the desire for personal expression, a preoccupation with certain themes, an engagement with film language, an attitude toward the spectator—always mediated by the question of the "national." The Brazilian filmmaker is haunted by the specter of cultural colonialism, of being too imitative, too servile toward the dominant model. (That this specter came to haunt virtually all Brazilian filmmakers constituted a victory for Cinema Novo, since during the first four or five decades of Brazilian cinema copying the foreign model implied no shame.) Given the foreign domination of the market, and given the immense obstacles to making films, the cinema, for better or worse, has been evaluated by its contribution to "development" and "national liberation." The filmmakers express their creative personalities, but they also see themselves as part of a larger collective project: the consolidation of a national cinema.

The concept of the national, however, is hardly unproblematic. Quite apart from the historical ambiguities of nationalism—the slippage between its original meaning as racial group and its later meaning as politically organized entity, the oscillation between its progressive and regressive poles—there are also cultural and intellectual ambiguities at work. The early discussions of nationalism took it as automatic that the issue was simply one of expelling the foreign to recover the national, as if the nation were a kind of "heart of the artichoke," to be found by peeling away the outer leaves, or as if, to change the metaphor, the nation were the ideal sculpted form lurking within the unworked stone. Roberto Schwarz calls this view the "national by subtraction," that is, the idea that the simple elimination of foreign influences will automatically allow the national culture to

emerge in its native glory.[4] The project of eliminating the foreign and recuperating the national is shared, incidentally, by both left and right, except that each gives the words *national* and *foreign* a distinct political inflection. For right-wing "national-security" ideologists, it is an "alien" Marxism that must be excised for the nation to regain its integrity, while for the left it is imperialism and the multi-national corporations that must be expelled.

We will not linger here on the deficiencies of the right-wing analysis but will explore the ambiguities of the left position. First, the topos of a unitary nation elides the realities of class, camouflaging the possible contradictions between different sectors of Brazilian society and distracting attention from the internal mechanisms of Brazilian capitalism. Second, the exaltation of "the national" fails to provide criteria for distinguishing exactly what it is that is worth retaining in the national tradition. A sentimental nationalism that valorizes patriarchal social institutions simply because they are "ours" can hardly be seen as progressive. Third, even apart from the question of class, there are many "Brazils"—urban and rural, male and female, indigenous, black, immigrant, and so forth. The view of the nation as a unitary subject has the effect of muffling the "polyphony" of social and ethnic voices characteristic of a heteroglot culture. Fourth, the precise nature of the national "essence" to be recuperated is extremely elusive and chimerical. Some nationalist purists locate this essence in the past—for example, before North American or British or Portuguese influence—or in the rural interior of the country, or in an earlier stage of development (the pre-industrial), or in a non-European ethnicity (the indigenous substratum, Afro-Brazil). But in Brazil, even the most prized national symbols come with the mark of the foreign. Palm trees came from India, soccer came from England, and the samba traces its roots to Africa. National communities must be envisioned as "imagined" communities, in Benedict Anderson's apt phrase, just as many of the traditions valorized by nationalism must be seen as what E. J. Hobsbawm calls "invented traditions."[5] Any definition of Brazilian nationality, then, must be selective, must take class into account, must allow for racial difference and cultural heterogeneity, and must be dynamic, seeing "the nation" as an evolving, imaginary construct rather than an originary essence.

National Cinema in the Era of the Cultural Industry

Our discussion here will move from 1964, the year of the coup initiating military rule, to 1984–85, the years in which civilian rule was restored and the "New Republic" (Nova Republica) was called into being by a collective act of political will. For Brazilian cinema, the first date represents the moment of rupture for a recently born Cinema Novo then in its first flushes of precocious brilliance, a creative explosion that generated the memorable trilogy of the arid northeast—Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Vidas Secas* (*Barren Lives*; 1963), Glauber Rocha's *Deus e Diabo na Terra do Sol* (*Black God, White Devil*; 1964), and Ruy Guerra's *Os Fuzis* (*The Guns*; 1964). Made at a time when a populist government was promoting basic agrarian reforms, all three films make the *sertão* (backlands) the setting for a filmic anatomy of hunger, property relations, class struggle, and revolution. With the coup d'etat, however, leftist film production was interrupted: Universities and cineclubs were raided, copies of Soviet silent classics such as *Mother* and *Battleship Potemkin* were seized, and Cinema Novo, as a consequence, was forced to confront a political disaster.

The date 1984–85, meanwhile, evokes the agony of the dictatorship and the popular struggle for direct elections and the transition to the New Republic. But the present period in no way represents a euphoric millennium for either the cinema or the country; it is instead a time of acute crisis and self-questioning. While much of the questioning centers on the necessary rethinking of the role of the governmental film agency Embrafilme (now seen as an effective film distributor but otherwise an unproductive bureaucracy), there is also a pervasive feeling of a crisis in creative direction. The generational transition has gone less smoothly than was hoped. It is noteworthy, in this sense, that several early 1980s productions by Cinema Novo veterans brought to fruition projects first conceived in the late 1950s or early 1960s—for example, Eduardo Coutinho's *Cabra Marcado para Morrer* (*Twenty Years After*; 1984), Leon Hirszman's *Eles Não Usam Black Tie* (*They Don't Wear Black Tie*; 1981) and Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Memorias de Carcere* (*Memories of Prison*; 1984), as if Brazilian cinema were still living off the residual energy of what one might call the "heroic period."

The present sense of crisis derives from the fact that if repression and censorship have disappeared, the endemic economic problems of Brazilian cinema have not. Brazilian filmmakers live in a situation of galloping inflation, of $130 billion national debt, where the *cruzeiro* (now *cruzado*) is forever in decline and the dollar ever stronger, where Hollywood "dumps" its films and television serials at low prices on the Brazilian market, and where, as a consequence, every year it becomes more difficult to make films. Brazilian television, in contrast, has largely escaped the negative effects of the crisis. By 1962, the same year that Cinema Novo was garnering its first international prizes, videotape was already rationalizing television produc-

tion. Also in 1962, the Congress approved Law 4117, the "Brazilian Code of Telecommunications," endorsing the idea of national integration, security, and development through television. The hope was to link all of Brazil through reliable telephones, telex, and televisual systems, accompanied by the provision of the technological infrastructure required for national networks. In 1965, the government created Embratel (Brazilian Enterprise for Telecommunications) to carry out this task, and in 1967 it created the Ministry of Communications as the bureaucratic agency providing financial and logistic support for the project. Brazilian television was then linked to Intelstat satellites, thus achieving its dream of addressing all Brazilians at the same time. The ideology of "national security" prodded the regime into modernizing the sphere of communications for purposes of national integration. In the era of the Brazilian "economic miracle," furthermore, television, unlike the cinema, directly served the national economy by integrating more and more consumers into a world-market economy. As a result, Brazilian television flourished, becoming a virtual paradigm of commercial success in a dependent Third World context—Brazil's TV Globo is now the fourth largest private network in the world in audience and resources—while Brazilian cinema suffered the triple whammy of runaway inflation, urban crisis, and dollar hegemony. And as the coup de grace, Brazilian television, unlike many of its European counterparts, has virtually boycotted national films. (In 1986, for example, out of 2,170 films screened on Rio's six television channels, only 35 were Brazilian.)[6]

All these factors generated an immense gap between the two media; while television was consolidated as a mass vehicle in the 1960s, cinema reached quasi-industrial status only in the 1970s, a temporal lag whose consequences are still with us. While Brazilian cinema has achieved only a precarious grip on the internal market—going from 13.9 percent of the market in 1971 to 35 percent in 1982—Brazilian television dominates the internal market with huge telenovela hits such as *Escrava Isaura* (Slave Isaura) and *Roque Santeiro*. (The latter was seen by a daily audience of over 70 million people.) In the same period, 1971–83, the percentage of foreign television programming declined from 60 percent to 30 percent (and during prime time to only 23 percent), a proportion placing Brazil on a par with such European countries as France, Italy, and the United Kingdom.[7] While Brazilian cinema existed under the fragile protection of the Ministry of Culture, Brazilian television was linked to the powerful Ministry of Communications. And while Brazilian films are screened sporadically in international film festivals and only exceptionally distributed abroad, Brazilian television programs are systematically exported to Latin America, Portugal, Italy, France, Poland, and even China.[8]

The long-term implications of these processes were hardly clear to the young filmmakers of the 1960s. Their auteurist project with its artisanal utopia of "a camera in hand, and an idea in the head"—as the slogan of the time had it—merely postponed, as it were, a deeper reflection on the role of cinema within a larger "culture industry." Indeed, early Cinema Novo formulations largely avoided the question of the evolving nature and role of the mass media in Brazil. How was one to develop a national cinema while rejecting the idea of the market and of consumerism? How was Glauber Rocha's Brechtian-style attack on "digestive cinema" and his denunciation of the "public at any price" mentality to be reconciled with the desire to reach the popular audience? How could one reconcile an anti-industrial and even avant-garde cinema with the realities of mass-mediated culture and the consciousness industry? The struggle against authoritarian militarism after 1964, meanwhile, distracted attention from deep structural changes in the Brazilian cultural economy, masking the fact that the military regime in some ways constituted a modernizing force that consolidated capitalism, energized the media, and promoted the circulation of "cultural goods." (Left intellectuals continued to see even a right-wing state as a means for confronting foreign domination, whence their support for Embrafilme.) The period of military rule was marked by a dramatic expansion in cultural production—books, journals, television programs, films—as part of a general industrialization of culture. Cinema Novo theorizations symptomatically favored Frantz Fanon, with his notions of liberatory violence (see the essay by Rocha in volume one) and national fulfillment, and Antonio Gramsci, with his ideal of the "organic intellectual," over what are now seen as the more theoretically advanced formulations concerning the culture industry. Only in the late 1960s, when it became obvious that the audiovisual economy was revolving around television, did such issues come to the foreground, and by then the theme of debate was the crisis of cinema rather than its promise and potentialities. The consolidation of the hegemony of the cultural industry, in this period, was accompanied by a few compensatory mechanisms favoring the media marginalized by that hegemony. But in general the cinema, forced passively to suffer the vicissitudes of official cultural policy, saw itself outperformed by other cultural sectors, such as television and popular music, whose internal dynamics were more attuned to international currents.

The challenge confronting Brazilian filmmakers must be seen in the light of the socioeconomic transformations triggered by what might be called "conservative modernization," a model that promotes industrial

expansion built on repressed wages, the proletarianization of the middle class, and a general shift toward jobs in administration, communications, and services. It would be inaccurate to see the current crisis in the cinema as the simple product of "20 years of dictatorship." Brazilian cinema has always survived within a situation of scarcity, dependency, undercapitalization, and inadequate technical infrastructure. The crisis engendered by economic neo-colonialism and by Hollywood's stranglehold on the market preceded the dictatorship—indeed, it was precisely that crisis that motivated Cinema Novo to search for alternative methods of production. What the post-1964 period did bring was the additional "nuisance" of political censorship as the most visible aspect of repression: the interruption of leftist film production, the raids on cineclubs, the banning or delayed exhibition of films, and the exile of numerous filmmakers.

The negative effects of this conjunction of economic crisis and political censorship on the cinema were not "automatic," however, any more than the positive effects of the re-democratization known as *abertura* (opening) were automatic. Whereas in Argentina the end of dictatorship brought with it an impressive cinematic resurgence, in Brazil, some of the liveliest moments of creativity and debate coincided with the periods of the most intense repression. The cultural hegemony of the left, in terms of publication, filmmaking, and cultural production generally was stronger, ironically, during the dictatorship than it was later with re-democratization. The brutally repressive period 1969–74 produced more provocative films than the subsequent period of liberalization. While the earlier period offered the tropicalist subversion of *Macunaíma* (1969), the ironic cannibalism of *Como Era Gostoso Meu Frances* (*How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*; 1971), the distanced (Brechtian) analysis of *São Bernardo* (1973), and the formal subversion of *Triste Tropico* (1974), the post-1974 period has generally featured more conventional works, including the eminently "safe" literary adaptations of major Brazilian writers such as novelist Jorge Amado (*Tent of Miracles* and *Gabriela*) and playwright Nelson Rodrigues (*Bei jo no Asfalto, Bonita mas Ordinaria* and *Dama da Lotacão*).

Cinema Novo in the Wake of the Coup (1964)

Cinema Novo was the Brazilian version of a "politique des auteurs" that undermined the bureaucratic hierarchies of conventional production in the name of "life" (that is, Brazilian reality), "actuality" (political commitment), and "creation" (the search for a language adequate to the precarious conditions of a Third World country and capable of

conveying a dis-alienating vision of social experience)—we find here a process of "translation" typical of Third World societies. In these allegories of underdevelopment, an "aesthetic of hunger" turns scarcity itself into a signifier, much as the Judaic allegorical tradition turned slavery and exile into a badge of honor. In a symbiosis of theme and method, the very lack of advanced technical resources was metaphorically transmogrified into an expressive force. The new political conjuncture after the coup d'etat forced a reconceptualization of goals and the means for realizing them. As one response, a number of filmmakers chose to perform tortured autopsies of the debacle, in films whose veiled or explicit theme was the coup itself or the failure of the populist left, the case of Saraceni's *O Desafio* (*The Challenge*; 1965), Marion Fiorani's *A Derrota* (*The Defeat*; 1967), Glauber Rocha's *Terra em Transe* (*Land in Anguish*; 1967), Nelson Pereira dos Santos' *Fome de Amor* (*Hunger for Love*; 1968), and Gustavo Dahl's *Bravo Guerreiro* (*Brave Warrior*; 1968). *The Challenge*, for example, satirizes what is known in Brazil as the "festive left," that is, a left more interested in wild parties than effective militancy, while *Hunger for Love* allegorizes the isolation of the left, embodied in a revolutionary figure who is blind, out of touch, and confined to an island.

In this period, two key films made a sharp break with all of the antecedent traditions: Rocha's *Land in Anguish* and Rogerio Sganzerla's *Red Light Bandit* (1968). Fusing an avant-garde aesthetic with a courageous denunciation of the populist politics that led to the coup d'etat, *Land in Anguish* shocked its progressive audience by portraying left populism as a pseudo-democratic masquerade, a "tragic carnival." Leftists who initially denounced the film as "fascist" later came to recognize its incisiveness. Lumping together the conspiratorial right and the incompetent left as two faces of elite power, the film, set in the imaginary country of Eldorado, animates synthetic characters representing vast historical forces—Diaz the fascist, Vieira the populist, Sara the communist—and deploys clearly allegorical strategies, figuring a modern-day coup d'etat, for example, in the form of a Shakespearean coronation. The portrait of the leftist poet-intellectual Paulo Martins—a contradictory, at times even reprehensible figure, given to lapses of skepticism and despair, infinitely less coherent than he imagines himself—forms a critical portrait of a whole generation of leftist intellectuals, conveyed by a vulcanic effluvium of words, sounds, and images constituting a baroque allegory of disenchantment.

The originality of *Land in Anguish* consisted in superimposing the logic of political economy and geo-politics—for example, the alliance of multinational imperialism and the Brazilian bourgeoisie against workers, peasants, and left intellectuals—on another cultural-anthro-

pological dynamic involving gestures, symbols, and decors that transform these historical agents into grotesque exempla of historical forces. The protagonist condenses contradictions that are not his alone, for the film establishes a resonance between his poetic delirium as agonizing narrator and the general atmosphere of hysteria and trance that marks the ambient political process. Drawing on fragments of the allegorical pageantry of Brazilian carnival, *Land in Anguish* shows Brazil as an unstable amalgam of Afro-indigenous mestizo culture subject to an overarching European domination. Rocha gives proleptic expression to what Brazilian intellectuals came to call the "crisis of totalizations," that is, the spreading skepticism about historical master-narratives such as Marxism with its faith in inevitable revolution and a history ordered by the progressive laws of dialectical materialism. The faith underlying first-phase Cinema Novo, in short, was corroding. While the earlier films had a virile and prophetic tone, the later ones are marked by disillusionment and a feeling of impotence. While to be a cultural worker in Brazil in the 1960s was to feel clearly and inexorably on the side of history, now ordinary social and intellectual life came to be marked by agony and doubt, with no clear vision of impending transformation on the horizon.

From Tropicalism to the Aesthetics of Garbage (1967–1972)

Epitaph of an era, at once anti-imperialist pamphlet and auto-critique, *Land in Anguish* served as a final envoi to Cinema Novo proper, and thus prepared, and concretely influenced, the subsequent artistic movement called tropicalism, which first manifested itself in music, poetry, theater, and film in 1967. Tropicalism drew partial inspiration from the Brazilian modernist avant-garde of the twenties—a modernism that fused political nationalism with aesthetic internationalism—and especially from Oswald de Andrade's notion of "anthropophagy" as metaphorically applied to cultural products. Inverting the binary pair civilization/barbarism in favor of barbarism, modernism articulated cannibalism as anti-colonialist metaphor in its "Cannibalist Reviews" and "Anthropophagic Manifestoes" and its famous slogan: "Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question," that is, whether Brazilian intellectuals should "go native" by symbolically imitating the cannibalistic Tupi-Guarani tribes or alienate themselves into European domination. The notion of "anthropophagy" supersedes the ideology of "the national by subtraction" by adopting a syncretic strategy that simply assumes the inevitability of intertextuality and the impossibility of a nostalgic return to a pre-lapsarian purity untainted by the foreign presence.

Tropicalist modernism, then, offers a kind of nationalist internationalism; the idea is to devour foreign technique in order to turn it against the foreigner. Within the cinema, tropicalist anthropophagy rejected Cinema Novo's Manichean opposition between "authentic Brazilian cinema" and Hollywood alienation, as well as the dualism that contrasted "pure" rural folklore with the imperialized mass culture of the cities. For tropicalism, the "crisis of totalizations" was a given. The pedagogic discourse of Cinema Novo was now an anachronism. More urgent, for the tropicalists, was a kind of artistic shock treatment designed to sabotage a falsely optimistic nationalism. The tropicalist allegory presented its diagnosis by mingling the native and the foreign, the folkloric and the industrial, the supermodern and the hyper-archaic, provoking the aesthetic prejudices of the middle-class audience by foregrounding all that was incongruous and grotesque in Brazilian society.

Red Light Bandit, a seminal independent production, brilliantly exemplifies these strategies. The film outlines the rise and fall of a dull-witted anti-hero mythologized by the media, in a milieu peopled by marginals: thieves, drug addicts, smugglers, prostitutes, and artists. The protagonist's recurrent question "Who am I?" encapsulates the identity crisis "after the fall," that is, after the failure of the nationalist project. A fractured, discontinuous figure, the protagonist forms a kind of container filled with fragments, myths, and masks derived from mass-media clichés, constructed in a manner that today would be called "post-modern." Rogerio Sganzerla shows the other side, then, of Rocha's totalizations but still within the allegorical mode. Sganzerla's proto-punk film inaugurates an iconography of urban development that inspired many subsequent Brazilian films, much as Rocha's *sertão* iconography had inspired a number of mythic-agrarian Third World films. We find the same frenetic hand-held camera, the rhetorical excesses, and discontinuous montage typical of Cinema Novo, but now folk literature and the music of Villa-Lobos have given way to tongue-in-cheek mambos, boleros, and cha-cha-chas.

Red Light Bandit inspired the epithet "aesthetics of garbage," an approach in which garbage provides the emblem of the social world portrayed and the key to the film's discursive procedures: the chaotic piling up of residue and detritus. Thus the film posits a homology between a red-light district in a Third World country as a social "realm of garbage" and the text itself as a collection of film and mass-media refuse: sensationalist press reports, radio broadcasts, American B-films, television serials, science fiction. *Bandit* is ostentatiously peripheral, on the very margin of the margins. Brazil is portrayed as a pageant of misery and corruption, a tragi-comic province at the edge

of the civilized world. (The sophistication of the film itself, meanwhile, emits the opposite message of aesthetic vanguardism.) The only possible lucidity in the face of banality and repression, for Sganzerla, is that of a black, bitter laughter, of the type expressed by the film's protagonist: "When one can do nothing, one raises hell."

"Garbage Cinema," or "Underground Cinema," during the period 1969–73 was also referred to as "Marginal Cinema," not only because the films promoted identification with marginal, transgressive figures, but also because the films were marginalized by exhibitors or kept out of the market by censorship. Since the underground flourished in the period immediately following the proclamation in 1968 of Institutional Act Number Five (the law abolishing Congress, habeas corpus, and other political rights), it has been seen as an angry response to repression extending the mood of radical disenchantment already palpable in *Land in Anguish*. The underground films reject all utopias—and in this sense they parallel the punk reaction to hippie love-and-peace optimism—in favor of the grotesque and the scatological. But in its aggressive refusal of compromise with the box-office mentality, the "aesthetic of garbage" can be seen as a radicalization of the "aesthetic of hunger." But here the early 1960s metaphor of hunger, evoking the victim finding self-redemption through Fanonian violence, gives way to the late 1960s metaphor of "garbage" as appropriate to a Third World country picking through the leavings of an international system dominated by First World monopoly capitalism.

The Metaphor of Cannibalism

The film that best manages the synthesis of intellectual reflection and popular appeal in this period is Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's *Macunaíma*, based on the 1928 modernist novel by Mario de Andrade. *Macunaíma* managed this synthesis by fusing the erudite anthropophagy of the novel with a comic-episodic narration reminiscent of Buster Keaton and the Marx Brothers. *Macunaíma* insured its own success by renewing contact with the most popular Brazilian film genre—the *chanchadas*; the *"filmes carnavalescos"* that dominated production from the 1930s through the 1950s. The director cast key *chanchada* actors such as Grande Otelo and Zeze Macedo, and featured songs popular from the *chanchada* period. Like the novel, the film develops cannibalism both as theme and as artistic strategy, exploiting the anthropophagic motif in order to expose the predatory Social Darwinism of class society in the Third World. The film's tangential relationship with tropicalism is evident not only in its anthropophagic theme but also in its emphasis on camp and gaudy colors, on the lack of national

character (the subtitle of the novel is *The Hero Without Any Character*) and on the melange of high-art tradition and mass-mediated culture. In other respects, however, the film prolongs the allegorical social critiques of Cinema Novo, but here performed with an oblique humor and cunning that caught even the censors off guard. While exploiting the *chanchada* as a strategy for communication, *Macunaíma* rejects the shallow utopianism of the *chanchadas'* happy endings in favor of a socially derived melancholy conclusion. The ideal of the hustler-trickster-hero is revealed to be empty, a dead end, in contrast with later idealizations, in early 1970s films like Hugo Carvana's *Vai Trabalha Vagabundo* (*Go to Work, Bum*; 1973), of marginal figures as admirable rebels and identifiable models for the spectator.

Also forming part of the anthropophagic branch of Cinema Novo is Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*, a film deeply rooted in the cannibalist intertext of Brazilian modernism. This ironical film sends a message of cultural relativism, activating the imaginary utopia of an indigenous tropical society totally unmarked by occidental guilt, a society to all appearances idyllic yet historically condemned to extinction. Set in the period of Brazil's colonization, the narrative subverts the colonialist premises of the travel-adventure genre by leading us, if not to applaud the French colonizer's cannibalization, at least to cheerfully acquiesce in it.

The metaphorical representation of the colonizing process in terms of the opposition Europe/Amerindia brings to the foreground the cultural matrix of the Indian, provoking a heightened sensitivity, on the part of the filmmakers, to the fate of the most egregious victims of the Brazilian historical process. In a first phase, the films focalize the Indian as the symbolic source of national cultural identity in opposition to colonizing Europe. In a later phase, especially in late-seventies documentaries, the emphasis shifts to the concrete and immediate fate of specific Indian tribes threatened with extinction. *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* belongs to the first phase, deploying anthropophagy as a metaphor for anti-colonial resistance, indeed, literalizing the metaphor in such a way that the historical perspective of the vanquished of the past comes to form a positively valenced reference for the political debates of the present. Gustavo Dahl's *Uirá* (1974), meanwhile, based on an anthropological reportage by Darcy Ribeiro, approaches the question from another angle: the melancholy of the Indian seeing his world and its mythologies annihilated by Western aggression and expansionism. Thus Dahl fuses the two themes: the venerable theme of the Indian as symbol of Brazilian identity (the positive pole) and the Indian as victim of physical and cultural genocide (the negative

pole), along with a pragmatic concern with the actual relationship between the remnant of the genocide and the present regime.[9]

The Allegorization of the Past

Within the repressive atmosphere of a military-dominated present, the past becomes a kind of reservoir or fund of images available for allegorical re-elaboration, a kind of wardrobe of themes and costumes to be borrowed for contemporary purposes.[10] Two films from 1972 allegorically raid the past in order to speak of the present: Leon Hirszman's *São Bernardo* and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's *Os Inconfidentes* (*The Conspirators*). Updating their sources, both Hirszman and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade distance themselves from their generic models—the conventional literary adaptation, in *São Bernardo*, and the historical costume-drama, in *Os Inconfidentes*. *São Bernardo* adopts Graciliano Ramos's 1934 novel, recounting the transformation of a peasant into a powerful plantation owner. The allegory lies in the fact that Hirszman, precisely at the height of the "economic miracle euphoria," chooses to expose the human cost of capitalist development. *São Bernardo* allegorizes the fascism of the 1960s and 1970s through a protagonist who, like Brazil's military leaders, comes to power through bribery and murder and who, again like the regime, enriches himself at the expense of others. The protagonist is treated as an exaggeration of deeper social tendencies, a heightened instance in which the system's fundamental logic is laid bare.

A similar distance, and the same attempt to reenact the past in order to allegorize the present, characterizes *Os Inconfidentes*, a reconstruction of an abortive eighteenth-century revolt against Portuguese colonialism, here used as a springboard for the discussion of the relation between intellectuals and the people, and between colonizer and colonized. (The film had an antecedent in the leftist theatrical adaptation of the same historical episode, in 1967, in *Arena Conta Tiradentes*, when the Arena Theatre, in keeping with the disenchanted political tone of the period, chose to memorialize an unsuccessful revolution from the colonial period.) Here one-shot sequences, direct-to-camera speeches, and stylized movements emphasize the primacy of the theatrical word, as well as the interplay of progressive politics and personal vanities and ambitions. By displacing events onto another century, the film analyzes the defeat of a political movement, using the past as allegorical vehicle for the analysis of present-day political process.

By sponsoring serious, mildly subversive literary and historical films, the regime entered into a kind of accord with the better-behaved of the opposition filmmakers, permitting some critique as long as it was confined to respectable literary adaptations or to historical dramas set in the safely remote past. The superpatriotic epics that the regime really favored—such as Massaini/Coimbra's *Independencia ou Morte* (Independence or death; 1972)—were extremely rare and not very popular. Thus Brazil lived under a Third World militarist national-security state, but its cinema, even at its worst, never became right-wing or propagandist. In the 1970s and the 1980s, the cinema became especially preoccupied with both recuperating and revising Brazilian history. Apart from the exempla of tacky patriotism promoted by the regime, this period features more significant films such as Tizuka Yamasaki's *Gaijin* (1980), the story of the exploitation of immigrant labor at the turn-of-the-century, Silvio Back's *Aleluia Gretchen* (*Hallelujah Gretchen*; 1976), a study of pro-fascist and pro-Nazi groups in Brazil during the interwar period, and Geraldo Sarno's *Coronel Delmiro Gouveia* (*Colonel Delmiro Gouveia; 1978*), an account of the economic heroism of a nationalist entrepreneur struggling against British domination.[11]

From Monologue to Dialogue

The oppositional spirit of the Brazilian cinema in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrates an enhanced openness to new voices and to other witnesses of the historical process. If no longer capable of making major diagnostic-prophetic statements about the national destiny, Brazilian cinema now becomes more open to difference and more permeable to the cultural values of ordinary Brazilians. Rather than speak about or to the people, the director seeks to allow the people to speak for themselves in order to affirm their cultural values without forcing them into a larger teleological design or pedagogical purpose. The questioning of "totalizations" here takes the form of re-envisioning "the nation" as what Bakhtin would call a "polyphony," a many-languaged multiplicity of classes and ethnicities with distinct voices and trajectories.

This new "modesty" on the part of filmmakers is evidenced in several documentary and experimental films that discard the covert elitism of the pedagogical model in favor of an acquiescence in the relative and the contingent. Artists experience a salutary self-doubt about their own capacity to speak "for" the other. Some experimental films, for example, address the very impossibility of filmmakers successfully addressing areas outside of their experience. Artur Omar's *Congo* mocks the very idea of white middle-class filmmakers saying

anything of value about indigenous or Afro-Brazilian culture. Other documentarists simply hand over the camera to the "other." Andrea Tonacci uses cinema and video as a kind of facilitator for a two-way "conversation" between urban whites and indigenous tribes. At times the dialogue turns against the filmmakers themselves. In *Raoni*, the Indians discuss the wisdom of killing the filmmakers—for them just one more bunch of potentially murderous white men—ultimately deciding to spare them so "they can bring our message to other whites." In Sergio Bianchi's *Mato Eles?* (*Should I kill them?* 1983), a venerable Indian asks the director exactly how much money he was paid to make the film, the kind of inconvenient question that would normally make its way to the editing-room trashcan. Thus the filmmaker assumes some of the risks of a real dialogue, of potential challenge from his interlocutor. And whereas most of the militant documentaries of the sixties combined orthodox left politics (working class over lumpenproletariat, class over culture, gender, and race) with omniscient voice-of-God narration, the new "voice of the other" cinema combines interview and self-presentation with a principled self-effacement on the part of the director. The cinema, rather than an instrument of monologue, becomes an amplifier of polyphony. Rather than a patronizing explanation of difference premised on elite exteriority, we find the defense and celebration of difference itself.

While Cinema Novo, despite its revolutionary concerns, had largely bypassed the urban working class—Cinema Novo always seemed to prefer those both lower (the *favelados*) and higher (the elite) on the social ladder—the films of the 1970s showed the impact of workers' struggles, partly as a result of the immense coming-to-consciousness and political mobilization of the workers in São Paulo culminating in the strikes that paralyzed the city in 1978. Several films treat this theme, in a variety of styles and formats. Leon Hirszman's *They Don't Wear Black Tie* offers, within a style of conceptual realism, a gallery of synecdochic proletarian characters, ranging from the old leftist Otavio and his confused son Tiao through the impatient "adventurist" radical Sartini and the courageous black unionist Braulio, supporting, finally, a cautious, disciplined militancy. In allegorical terms, the veteran militant filmmaker "corrects" the lost generation of the dictatorship, and in this sense distorts history, for in fact, the São Paulo strikes were the product of a new generation typified by Louis Ignacio da Silva ("Lula") and his "Workers Party," rather than of the traditional left.

The Penchant for Metacinema

The films of this period are preoccupied with the issue of the relation between intellectuals and the marginalized masses to whom they offer what Walter Benjamin called "mediated solidarity." Accompanying the history not only of the cinema but also of general theoretical reflection, the filmmaker forms part of a collective intellectual trajectory and is conscious of working with issues having a long history of formulation in a body of filmic and extra-filmic texts. Working within, or in reaction against, this tradition, the filmmaker becomes almost necessarily reflexive, engaged in dialogue with the received body of belief and method, directly or indirectly discussing the cinema within the films. Each film becomes a methodological sample of possible strategies, at once "about" a subject and "about" itself. Here Brazilian cinema is in step with international cinema, with its ever-greater tendency to reflexivity, whether modernist (early Godard), Brechtian (late Godard) or post-modernist (Brian de Palma), but there are also national and continental specificities at work, rooted in the marginal and syncretic nature of the Latin American cultural experience. The Latin American artist/intellectual is almost by definition bicultural, at once inside and outside, defined as at the margins yet thoroughly penetrated by the center. As the product both of Third World marginalization and of cultural and ethnic *mesticaje* (racial mixing), Brazilian intellectuals, especially, tend to be multi-cultural and therefore language-and culture-conscious, inhabiting a peculiar realm of irony where words and images are seldom taken at face value.

Whatever the root cause of the phenomenon, metacinema and reflexivity have been virtually ubiquitous in Brazilian cinema of the past few decades. (We use the terms here in their broadest possible sense to refer to films that foreground the filmmaker, the film's textual procedures, its intertext or its reception.) We find reflexivity in *Sonho Sem Fim* (*Dream Without End*; 1986), Lauro Escorel's film about Brazilian film pioneer Eduardo Abelim, in *Bras Cubas* (1985), Julio Bressane's reflexive adaptation of a reflexive Machado de Assis novel; in *Nem Tudo e Verdade* (*It's Not All True*; 1985), Rogerio Sganzerla's witty documentary/fiction about Orson Welles's ill-fated attempt to make a film in Brazil; and even in the cinematic obsessions and films-within-the-film of *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985). While the "voice-of-the-other" films offer a cultural critique of earlier totalizations, the reflexive films propose an aesthetic critique, casting doubt on the mastery and confidence implicit in earlier modes of storytelling. This critique takes on an experimental dimension, for example, in the work of Julio Bressane, who with each new film throws the light

of his metacinematic obsession on another generic tradition, from the *chanchada*, in *Rei do Baralho* (*King of the Cards*; 1974) to the early Brazilian avant-garde as encapsulated by Mario Peixoto's *Limite* (*Limit*; 1930) in *Agonia* (*Agony*; 1978). *Cinema Inocente* (*Innocent Cinema*; 1979), meanwhile, documents the activities of a porno-*chanchada* editor while underlining the impossibility of the sophisticated filmmaker's ever returning to a state of innocence before the images he films and edits. *Tabu* (Taboo; 1982), for its part, tries to "transvalue" the codes of the *chanchada*. Bressane posits a hypothetical meeting between twenties popular composer Lamartine Babo and modernist poet and dramatist Oswald de Andrade, played by veteran *chanchada* actor Colé, thus evoking the dialogue of popular culture and the erudite avant-garde. At the same time, the film elegizes the Rio of the thirties as a lost tropical paradise by associating it with interpolated footage from Murnau's *Tabu*.

The Emblem of Carnival

Tabu is not the only film in this period to renew contact with the carnivalesque *chanchada*, by now seen as the quintessential symbol of successful communication with the Brazilian public, the fount of a cinema at once nationalist, pragmatic, and popular. (We have come a good distance since Glauber Rocha's almost total rejection of the genre in the early 1960s.) The process of revalorization of the *chanchada* began with tropicalism's provocative leveling, in the late 1960s, of high (erudite) and low (popular) culture. In the fields of criticism and history, meanwhile, the revalorization of the *chanchada* was furthered by the argumentation of film historian Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes, who claimed in "Cinema: A Trajectory Within Underdevelopment," not only that the *chanchadas* were of vital importance for having retained the loyalty of the Brazilian audience but also that all Brazilian films, even the most imitative, remained authentically Brazilian, thanks to what he was fond of calling the Brazilian "creative incapacity for copying."[12] Now that the *chanchada* is dead, it becomes history and therefore available for nostalgic or critical re-elaboration, a legitimate urban tradition to be incorporated much as rural folklore was incorporated by Cinema Novo. The filmic revitalization of the *chanchada* takes a diversity of forms; romantic in Carlos Diegues's *Quando O Carnaval Chegar* (*When Carnival Comes*; 1972), conceptual-reflexive in Bressane's stylistic exercises, and comic-parodic-erotic in Ivan Cardoso's ironic "vampirization" of the horror film in *Segredo da Mumia* (*Secret of the Mummy*; 1982) and *As Sete Vampiras* (*The Seven Vampires*; 1986).

The *chanchadas* were called "carnivalesque films," and the latter-day recuperation of the *chanchada* goes hand in hand with the rediscovery of carnival as an emblem of national identity, a culturally rooted master-trope crystallizing a richly syncretic culture that still has a place for an orgiastic ritual at once sacred and profane. For the Cinema Novo veterans, the reaffirmation of carnival signifies a retreat from the old puritanical-leftist equation of party/festivity with alienation and escapism, a tendency present, for example, in *Cinco Vezes Favela* (*Five Times, Favela*; 1962), where the popular classes were exhorted to abandon the samba in favor of union militancy. The evocation of carnival, in the 1970s and 1980s, goes from the literal presence of "samba schools" in such films as *Lira do Delirio* (*Delicious Lyre*; 1978) or *Idade da Terra* (*Age of the Earth*; 1980) to the conceptualization of entire films, such as *Xica da Silva* and *Quilombo*, as the equivalents of "sambaenredos," that is, as analogous in their aesthetic procedures to the ensemble of songs, dances, costumes, and lyrics that form part of samba school pageantry. Farnando Cony Campos's *Ladroes de Cinema* (*Cinema Thieves*; 1977) foregrounds this analogy by having his favelado protagonists, dressed symptomatically as Indians, steal filmmaking equipment from American tourists visiting Rio's carnival. The favelados conceive the film they plan to make with the stolen equipment—about the same eighteenth-century revolt analyzed by *The Conspirators*—as a kind of samba school narration. The only solution for Brazilian film, *Cinema Thieves* suggests allegorically, is carnivalesque irreverence and the anthropophagic devouring of foreign equipment and technique.

These reapproximations with popular culture reflect an attempted identification, by the filmmakers, with the more perennial features of Brazilian cultural life, a compromise formation that allows for a discussion of the intellectual's function and the assimilation of the popular vision. At its best, this strategy leads to a kind of popular yet pedagogic cinema fusing social critique with carnival-style joy. At its most innocuous, it turns into the complacent recycling of the clichés about presumed Brazilian character traits and the Brazilian national style, eliding real conflicts in favor of the celebration of the "cordiality" of the fun-loving Brazilian. At its worst, a superficial view of carnival celebrates the Brazilian capacity for political conciliation, mocked by Glauber Rocha as the historical tendency for the now-repentant-right to hold hands again with the now well-behaved left, while "tudo acaba em samba" (everything ends in the samba).[13] The happy togetherness of the party, in this apolitical version of Bakhtin's subversive carnival, forms the utopian horizon of a cinema with one eye on the samba and the other on the box-office.[14]

Parables of Modernization

In a more serious vein, any number of seventies and eighties films by Cinema Novo veterans offer a globalizing vision of society expressed in allegories of underdevelopment and modernization. Jorge Bodansky/Orlando Senna's *Iracema* (1975), for example, tells the exemplary tale of a poor Indian girl, Iracema (her name, an anagram of "America," alludes to the heroine of a nineteenth-century romantic Indianist novel) and her relationship with the truck driver Tiao Brazil Grande (Big Brazil Sebastian). Within this asymmetrical couple, Tiao is played by the well-known actor Paulo Cesar Pereio, while Iracema is played by the non-actor Edna di Cassia. Tiao is active agent, initiator, entrepreneur; Iracema is object, acted upon, prostitute. Tiao is associated with the pet project of the dictatorship, the Transamazonian Highway and the modernizing nationalism it represents. He is the mistakenly arrogant embodiment of the spirit of the Brazilian "miracle" and the ill-advised Pharonic ambitions that led to a $100 billion debt. The film develops a structural contrast between two filmic approaches: first, that of cinematic reportage with hand-held camera, registering the ecological devastation and human exploitation in the Amazon, and second that of fictional and allegorical procedures involving the relationship of Tiao and Iracema. In a total interpenetration of documentary and fiction—for example, the actor Pereio pretends to be a real-life truck driver around people who do not know him to be an actor—the film understatedly denounces the human toll of frontier "development."

Both Ruy Guerra/Nelson Xavier's *A Queda* (*The Fall*; 1978) and Arnaldo Jabor's *Tudo Bem* (*Everything's Fine*; 1977), similarly, build on the metaphor of construction to make a general statement about Brazilian modernization. *The Fall*'s local story about construction workers building Rio's subway system is "made to speak" more generally about the overall development of Brazilian society in the era of a consumerist development, national integration through satellite transmission, and the restructuring of urban space wrought by advanced capitalist development. The same metaphor subtends the allegorical *Tudo Bem*, where a bourgeois couple invites construction workers to remodel their Carioca apartment. As the construction workers and maids take over the apartment—the "slave quarters," in Rocha's felicitous phrase, "invade the Big House"—the apartment becomes a symbolic microcosm, the site of intersection of conflicting class discourses and interests. The theatrical-allegorical procedure of the closed space suggests an apartment, that is, Brazil, undergoing a superficial modernization in which the illusion of "tudo bem" masks the traces of predatory class violence and relations of oppression.

Carlos Diegues's *Bye Bye Brazil* (1980) creates a kind of picaresque allegory in which the "Caravana Rolidei"—a motley troupe of ambulatory artists—wanders around Brazil to witness the advance of modernization heralded by a national television that flattens regional diversity and renders obsolete the troupe's old-fashioned entertainment. Here the social contradictions compressed into a single apartment in *Tudo Bem* are anamorphically splayed out over the wide screen of the Amazon basin. Alongside its self-flauntingly theatrical core fiction, *Bye Bye Brazil* presents a kind of seismological documentary registering the aftershocks of the "multi-nationalization" of the Brazilian subcontinent. The title of the film (whose original title was also in English) points to its generalizing intentions, and the film as a whole provides dramatic confirmation of the Americanization pointed out in the lyrics of the title song: pinball machines in the jungle, Indian chiefs sporting designer jeans, backlands bands that sound like the Bee Gees.

Glauber Rocha's last film, the avant-garde superproduction *Age of the Earth* (1980), picks up the old allegorical method with experimental audacity and gusto. The film proliferates in synecdochic allegorical characters: four Christs (an Indian, a black, a military man, a guerilla) along with personifications of Imperialism, the Indigenous Nations, the Amazons, and the New Woman. Bringing to its paroxysm the typical Glauberian tension between synthesis and fragmentation, the film immerses itself in the cultural multiplicity of lived experience in Brazil. Synthetic in its space and locations—Brasilia, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, baroque interiors, exuberant exteriors—and in its generic nature—documentary, symphony, allegory, experimental film—it shows Brazil as profoundly syncretic, a peripheral country in the age of dying imperialisms, a social formation animated by diverse Western and non-Western religions, whose energy is suffocated by internal ruling-class and external neo-colonial oppression.

Rocha's schematic presentation of Brazil views urbanization as a kind of death, while all that is most vital comes from what is most archaic. The metaphor of civil construction, familiar from *Tudo Bem* and *A Queda*, reappears in *Age of the Earth*, but this time in the Biblical image of the people exploited by pharoahs in the edification of tombs. At the same time, Rocha emphasizes the immensity of the country, developing a geographical trope of capital importance in recent Brazilian cinema, suggesting that the present phase of its imaginary and its reflection involves the exploration of new frontiers, and a desire to verify *in loco* the actual effects of Third World capitalism.

This preoccupation is present not only in *Age of the Earth*, *Bye Bye Brazil*, and *Iracema*, but also in several first-feature "road movies" by young directors, such as Geraldo Morais's *A Dificil Viagem* (*The Difficult Voyage*; 1982) and Augusto Seva's *A Caminho das Indias* (*On the Road to the Indies*; 1982). This reaching out to the frontiers represents a historic return to one feature of the early Cinema Novo films. When Brazilian Cinema wants to speak for Brazil as a whole, when it wants to speak of national identity, it continues to reach beyond the urban centers, where the filmmakers live and work, to the strength and density of the "other Brazil:" the northeast, the Amazon, the vast Brazil far from the wealthy and Europeanized south. Brazilian Cinema observes the process of modernization at its frontier points, at the very edges of the national experience, and even when it immerses itself in the city, it is to encounter the traces of the margins at the center, whether in the form of migrants from the other Brazil, or in the northeasterners and obscure religious practices that invade the apartment of *Tudo Bem*, or the immigrant workers who build the subway in *The Fall*, in the hillbilly singers in *Estrada da Vida*, or the immigrants, football players, and prostitutes of countless films made in São Paulo.

Allegories of Abertura

Many latter-day Cinema Novo films, as we have seen, such as *They Don't Wear Black Tie*, *Twenty Years After*, and Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Memories of Prison* bring to fruition projects conceived in the late 1950s or early 1960s. Despite political liberalization, Cinema Novo is faithful to allegorical methods elaborated even before the coup d'etat. Based on the prison memoirs of Brazilian novelist Graciliano Ramos, *Memories of Prison*, for example, charts Ramos's descent, in the late thirties, into the hell of the prisons of Getulio Vargas. With each successive attempt at dehumanization, Ramos gains character and humanity through resistance, becoming a more committed human being at the same time that he comes to appreciate his vocation as a writer. Within the prison, he discovers what separated him, the progressive intellectual, from the people. The Third World gulag becomes, for him, the scene of a purificatory rite. The dramatic situations of the film are arranged in a double and complementary crescendo: the writer's developing participation in the life of the prisoner parallels the prisoners' increasing collaboration in the work of the writer. Thus the film presents the author's vision of the role of the progressive artist, whose "witness" turns the common experience into remembered history, thus offering a ringing endorsement of the vocation of literature—and by analogy, the cinema—as a critical register of social existence.

Memories of Prison is allegorical in still another sense, in that it encodes one set of events, transpired in the thirties, to speak about another set of events. Just as the "joke" in *Vidas Secas* consists in its being set in the past, yet nothing has changed, so *Memories of Prison* has everything to do with the Brazil of "abertura." The prison's "Freedom Radio" speaks of debts and bankers' agreements, and a soldier tells the writer, in a transparent allusion to two decades of military rule: "It will take you civilians a good while to get rid of us." The eagerness of the prisoners to come to decisions by vote evokes, for the Brazilian, the energetic 1984 campaign for direct presidential elections. The film begins and ends with the Brazilian national anthem, at a time when patriotism was back in style in Brazil, precisely because of the re-democratization. The anthem marks the film as a microcosmic statement, suggesting that Brazil has the aspect of a prison, yet one whose prisoners will soon be freed.

Eduardo Coutinho's reflexive documentary *Twenty Years After* offers a capsule history of Brazil and Brazilian Cinema during the two decades under discussion. Coutinho's initial project, conceived in the optimistic left-populist years before the 1964 coup d'etat, was to dramatically reconstruct the political assassination, in 1962, of peasant leader Joao Pedro Teixeira. The performers were to be Joao Pedro's comrades in work and struggle, the locale was to be the actual site of the events, and among the "actors" would be the deceased leader's widow, Elizabete. The coup d'etat interrupted the filming, however; the filmmakers and peasant participants were dispersed and the material already shot was hidden. Almost two decades later, encouraged by the liberalization of the eighties, the filmmaker sought out the hidden footage and the original "performers," now spread around the country by years of hardship and oppression. In the present-day film, the participants in the original film watch themselves on the screen, their faces and lives bearing witness to the scars left by dictatorship. A key figure in *Twenty Years After* is Elizabete, Joao Pedro's widow, bruised but still resilient and cautiously militant. The filmmaker discovers her living in another state, under an assumed name, cut off from former friends and much of her family, all necessary, as she explains, in "order not to be exterminated." After bitter repression, she re-encounters her family, reassumes her true name, and reaffirms her political convictions. In her capacity for disappearing, surviving, and then reappearing, she resembles, as Roberto Schwarz points out, the filmmaker himself.[15] The emotion generated by the film arises from the encounter of a committed filmmaker with an authentic popular heroine who, de-

spite everything, manages to connect the dots of her political trajectory, just as the filmmaker manages to complete his project. In a renewed confluence of political cinema and popular struggle, both cineaste and peasant leader reaffirm their struggle and solidarity.

In *Twenty Years After*, the vastness of Brazil is defined by the space of an exemplary diaspora: the dispersion and disintegration of the family and the erasing of identity by repression. But the descent into hell, as in *Memories of Prison*, is doubled by a reverse journey that leads, if not to paradise, at least to a historical situation where questions can be posed again. Tracing a two-decade process, the cinema literally intervenes in the life of the oppressed, and the story of the film begun, brutally interrupted, and now completed is mingled with the story of the people with whom the filmmaker dialogues. Thanks to the film, Elizabete Teixeira actually emerges from the underground and recomposes her identity. Between *Cabra* 1964 and *Cabra* 1984, the same questions continue to be relevant—repression, squatter's rights, agrarian reform, unionization, migration—but not in the same terms, just as the film is taken up again, but in a different mode.

The sixties meeting with the widow is paralleled by the highly didactic cinema of the period—a melange of *Salt of the Earth*-style realism with the populist idealism promoted by the Popular Centers of Culture, while the eighties meeting with the widow takes place in the era of network television and the accumulated experience of the Brazilian documentary. The filmic language is now more dialogical, less inclined to discourse omnisciently "about" the other, and more inclined to listen to and learn from the other. The film itself manifests this evolution by adroitly interweaving the procedures of the traditional documentary—and especially off-screen commentary—with more contemporary direct-cinema techniques—where we discern the presence of the author, the television professional, Eduardo Coutinho, from the well-known series "Globo Reporter." We see his crew working within the frame, making us acutely aware of a film-in-the-process-of-being-made before our eyes. *Twenty Years After* thus offers not only a telescoped representation of the history of both Brazil and of the Brazilian Cinema, but also a summa of our themes—the family as allegorical microcosm, documentary report, reflection on history, the voice of the other, metacinema, intertextuality (even in the most literal sense), in a synthesis at once political, social, anthropological, and filmic.

Epilogue

After the euphoric interlude of "abertura," we find a present situation characterized by perplexity and disorientation. In the middle of deep economic crisis and the interminable striptease of the "transition to democracy," we now encounter, in some quarters, a kind of fatigue with the very idea of the national, a disenchantment with the nationalist project (or at least with the idea that it can be realized) along with a loss of faith in its relevance for the cultural debate. In the wake of concrete political disappointments and the world-wide self-questioning of the left, nationalist discourse has lost much of its explanatory power and political persuasiveness. To many it has come to seem "empty," lacking in historical substance and cultural specificity. Here Brazil accompanies and is inflected by a more general disenchantment, in the "peripheral" countries, with the old Third World liberationist discourse, as well as by novel political and philosophical currents in the "metropolitan" countries.

Along with national disenchantment, a "post-modern" internationalist discourse has emerged, a discourse that argues that the lines between center and margin have been erased, that the category of nation has become irrelevant. Within the global village of transnational capitalism, the new internationalists argue, all cultures are caught up in the meaningless whirl of mass-mediated simulacra; there is no escaping the international standardization of human existences. On a micro-personal level, meanwhile, we find everywhere a retreat from common beliefs and collective heroism in favor of an atomized society devoid of collective purposes, broken up into an infinity of self-seeking monads. At the same time, an altered philosophical conjuncture also subtly undermines the idea of the national. The structuralist and post-structuralist attack on the "centered subject," while on one level seeming to promise a reformulation of old hierarchies, on another casts doubt, by extension, on the nation as the noble protagonist of a collective epic, as a trans-individual cogito or Sartrean "self-writ-large." The deconstructive assault on all that is "originary," meanwhile, also calls into question the idea of an "originary" nation. The old utopia of "authentic" national culture, under all these onslaughts, comes to seem a meaningless and hopelessly nostalgic chimera.

But theory is lived differently depending on whether one is "centered" in Paris or in São Paulo. The Brazilian internationalists, those whom we might call the "anti-nationalist internationalists," do not by their mere wish magically cease living a national situation they would desperately like to transcend; the pathos of their internationalism derives precisely from their status as intellectuals on the peri-

phery. A conscious option for internationalism does not short-circuit the mechanisms that effectively disappropriate peoples of their culture or nations of their power. The nationalism-versus-internationalism debate in this sense calls for revised formulations. The "center" penetrates the margins, but the margins also have an impact on the center. The "marginal" countries are not temporally "behind" the countries of the center; instead, they live the same historical moment, but in the mode of oppression. The nostalgic nationalists, for their part, cannot through an act of will of the nation-subject annihilate an internationalism built into a society inevitably molded by the planetary spread of Euro-American culture and the international media. For if postmodernism has spread the feel of First World consumerist culture around the globe, it has hardly deconstructed the relations of power between the metropolitan and the marginalized countries.

Throughout this century, Brazil has received, translated, and critically revised any number of First World intellectual and artistic movements, reformulating the dominant culture so as to subtly undermine its claims to universal authority. One finds the zenith of such creative/critical reformulation in Brazilian popular music, in the ways that composer-singers like Caetano Veloso or Gilberto Gil anthropophagically absorb all of the world's musics in order to crystallize their conception of "Brazilianness." In such cases, we find a progressive matching between the international movements and the vital necessities of the national culture. In the 1980s, however, with the pervasive sense of the end of all utopias, the various international "post" trends have yet to find a liberatory "translation" in Brazil. And the notion of "anthropophagy" requires modification in the era of the mass-media, when the "marginal" country is as likely to be devoured as devouring. (The First World media, in this perspective, are eminently anthropophagic.) Certain forms of internationalism, in this sense, can become a cover for hegemony, and the postmodern rejection of the national a figleaf masking an ongoing process of peripheralization.

Notes

1. See, for example, Roberto Schwarz, "Cultura e Politica, 1964–1969," written in 1970 and anthologized in *Pai de Familia e Outros Ensaios* (Rio: Paz e Terra, 1977); O. C. Louzado Filho, "O Contexto Tropicalista," in *Aparte*, no. 2 (1968); Gilberto Vasconcelos, *De Olho na Fresta* (Rio: Graal, 1977); Celso Favanetto, *Tropicalia, Alegoria, Alegria* (São Paulo: Kairos, 1979); and Ismail Xavier, "Alegoria, Modernidade, Nacionalismo," (São Paulo: Editora Funarte, 1985).

2. See Fredric Jameson, "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, no. 15 (Fall 1986). And for an excellent critique of the Jameson essay, see Aijas Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory," *Social Text*, no. 15 (Fall 1986).

3. See Joao Luiz Vieira, "From *High Noon* to *Jaws*: Carnival and Parody in Brazilian Cinema," in Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, eds., *Brazilian Cinema* (East Brunswick, N.J.: Associated Universities Press, 1982).

4. See Roberto Schwarz, "Nacional por Subtracao," in *Que Horas São* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987).

5. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflexions on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); and E. J. Hobsbawm and Terence Rogers, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

6. Renato Ortiz, *A Moderna Tradicão Brasileira: Cultura Brasileira e Industria Cultural* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1988).

7. Data included in Livia Antola and Everett Rogers, "Television Flows in Latin America," *Communications Research* 2, no. 2 (April 1984); and Tapio Varis, "The International Flow of Television Programs," *Journal of Communication* 34, no. 1 (1984).

8. There is now emerging a significant body of work, in Portuguese and in English, on Brazilian television. See, for example, C. R. Avila Avemdola, *A Teleinvasão: A Participação Extrangeira na Televisão do Brasil* (São Paulo: Cortez, 1982); Sergio Caparelli, *Televisão e Capitalismo no Brasil* (Porto Alegre: L & PM, 1982); M. E. Bonavita Federico. *Historia da Comunicação: Radio e TV no Brasil* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1982); Randal Johnson, "Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Globo: *Rogue Santeiro* and Brazil's 'New Republic,'" in *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 7 (1988); Maria Rita Kehl, "Reflexão para uma Historia da TV Globo" (Rio: Funarte, 1982), mimeo; Renato Ortiz, *A Moderna Tradicão Brasileira: Cultura Brasileira e Industria Cultural* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1988); Carlos Alberto M. Pereira and Ricardo Miranda, *Televisão* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1983); and Joseph Straubhaar, "The Transformation of Cultural Dependence: The Decline of American Influence on Brazilian Television Industry," Ph.D. dissertation, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, 1982.

9. Even the avant-gardist Julio Bressane, finally, in his *O Monstro Caraiba* (*The Carib Monster*; 1973) explores the Indian as national symbol in a filmic dialogue with Oswald de Andrade's "Cannibalist Manifesto" from the twenties. But Bressane reveals the Indianist theme as purely textual, the trace of the intermingling of cultures and ethnicities, a process that turns the spectators into readers of signs, rules, inscriptions, documents of the winners, and residue of diverse civilizations. The attempt to recuperate the past here leads only to a kind of hermeneutic vertigo.

10. It is important to note that allegorical critiques of the dictatorship were hardly limited to the cinema. In an illuminating article, Charles Perrone points out similar strategies in Brazilian popular music of the period. The Gilberto Gil/Chico Buarque song "Chalice," which in Portuguese evokes "chalice" and "shut up," recounts the despair provoked by imposed silence (read censorship) and was banned by the government in 1973, while Chico Buarque's "Apesar

National Consciousness in Brazilian Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

10. The role of Jewish producers in Hollywood is the subject of Robert Sklar's *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Random House, 1975) and Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Anchor, 1989.

11. On the subject of the systematic substitution of European immigrants for the newly-freed slaves, see Celia Maria Marinho de Azevedo, *Onda Negra/Medo Branco: O Negro no Imaginario das Elites Seculo XIX* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1987.

12. See Warren Dean, "O Village ja Foi Brasileiro" (Greenwich Village was once Brazilian,) *Folha de São Paulo* (May 13, 1987).

13. For more on the Bakhtinian conception of "polyphony," see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

14. See Mario de Andrade, "A Escrava que Nao e Isaura," in *Obra Imatura* (São Paulo: Martins, 1944).

15. I further explore the analogies between São Paulo and New York, and between *Macunaíma* and *Zelig* in "A Tale of Two Cities: Cultural Polyphony and Ethnic Transformation," in *East-West Film Journal*, Vol. III, No. 1 (December 1988).

16. See Mario de Andrade, *Poesias Completas* (São Paulo: Martins, 1972), pp. 203–4.

17. See Mario de Andrade, *Obra Imatura* (São Paulo: Martins, 1972), p. 266. For an excellent discussion of de Andrade's "harlequinate" identity, see David Haberly, *Three Sad Races*. For a discussion of the racial question within Modernism, see Zita St. Aubyn Nunes, *"Os Males do Brasil": Antropofagia e a Queestao da Raca* (Rio: SIEC, 1989).

18. A much later Brazilian artist, composer-singer Gilberto Gil, shows a similar capacity to evoke the polyphonic yet conflictual orchestration of racial identity in the Americas. In his song "From Bob Dylan to Bob Marley: A Provocation Samba," Gil deploys a number of broad cultural parallels and interactions, between Jewish symbology and Jamaican Rastafarianism, between the Inquisition's anti-semitism and the European suppression of African religions ("When the Africans arrived on these shores/there was no freedom of religion"), ultimately contrasting the progressive syncretism of a Bob Marley (who died "because besides being Black was Jewish") from the alienation of a Michael Jackson, who "besides turning white . . . is becoming sad."

19. Some of the key texts in the first wave of the comparative slavery debate are Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen* (New York: Knopf, 1947); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968); Eugene D. Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made* (New York: Vintage, 1971) and *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974); and Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Pantheon, 1976).

20. Tomas E. Skidmore makes this point in "O Negro no Brasil e nos Estados Unidos," *Argumento* No. 1 (1973).

21. See Carl N. Degler, *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1986. For a critique of the Degler view, see Carlos A. Hasenbalg, *Discriminacao r Desiqualdades Raciais no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1979).

22. It should be pointed out, however, that the sexual exploitation of black women in North America led to a huge population of persons of mixed ancestry, thus leading, in places like New Orleans, to Byzantine racial classifications, in the post-bellum period, involving quadroons, octoroons and so forth.

23. Statistics cited in Jose Oscar Beozzo, *Situacao do Negro na Sociedade Brasileira* (Petropolis: Vozes, 1984), pp. 563–64.

24. "In no other country," writes Howard Winant, "is the *salience* of race so uncertain, so disguised in its quotidian manifestations, so explicitly denied and implicitly upheld." See Howard Winant, *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 154.

25. See "Cem Anos, sen Qause Nada," *Veja* (April 20, 1988).

26. See Zelbert Moore, "Reflections on Blacks in Contemporary Brazilian Popular Culture in the 1980s" in *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, Vol. VII (1988).

27. Carlos Hasenbalg and Nelson do Valle Silva, "As Imagems do negro na publicidade," in *Estrutura Social, Mobilidade, e Raca* (São Paulo: Vertice, 1988), pp. 185–88.

28. See Amelia Simpson, *Xuxa: The Mega-Marketing of Gender, Race and Modernity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

29. See Winant, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

30. On convergence, see the work of Howard Winant *op. cit.* and of Michael Hanchard. Hanchard distinguishes between the Africanist orientation of cultural groups such as *Olodum* and the "Americanist" orientation of the explicitly political groups. See Michael Hanchard, *Black Orpheus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Among those calling for reparations is Fernando Conceicao, journalist and author of *Negritude Favelada* (1988) and *Cala a Boca Calabar* (1987).

31. Dain Borges argues that Brazilian abolitionists "were not haranguing opponents across a Mason-Dixon line, but were attacking a familiar institution." The direct-action "Caifazes Club" in São Paulo required that every new member initiate himself by freeing a slave from his own family. See Dain Borges, "Intellectuals and the Forgetting of Slavery in Brazil," *Annals of Scholarship* (1994).

32. For analyses of Brazilian abolitionism, see Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Da Senzala a Colonia* (São Paulo: Diffusao Europeia, 1966), Robert Conrad, *Os Ultimos Anos da Escravatura no Brazil* (Rio: Civilizacao Brasileira, 1975). For black rebellion under slavery, see Clovis Moura, *Rebelioes da Senzala* (Rio: Conqusta, 1972); Joao Jose Reis, *Rebeliao Escrava no Brasil* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1986); Maria Helena P. T. Machado, *Crime e Escravidao*

(São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1987); Joao Jose Reis and Eduardo Silva, *Negociacao e Conflito* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1989); and Lana Lage da Gama Lima, *Rebeldia Negra e Abolicionismo* (Rio: Achiame, 1981).

33. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (London: Zed, 1983), p. 96.

34. Musical groups from Bahia, specifically Olodum and Ile Aiye, have organized support for the present-day descendants of the quilombos, composing lyrics such as "Quilombo, here we are/my only debt is to the quilombo/ my only debt is to Zumbi." See James Brooke, "Brazil Seeks to Return Ancestral Lands to Descendants of Runaway Slaves," *The New York Times* (Sunday, Aug. 15, 1993), p. 3.

35. See Decio Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos* (Rio: Graal, 1974).

36. Carlos Diegues described *Quilombo* as a "kind of science fiction film, in the sense that I was not just interested in recounting what had happened in my country, but in projecting the future." See Carlos Diegues, "Choosing Between Legend and History: An Interview," in *Cineaste*, Vol. XV., No. 1 (1986), p. 12.

37. In her writings and artworks, Adrian Piper tries to explode the myth of racial separation, arguing that "after four hundred years of intermarrying" there are "no genetically distinguishable white people in this country." See Maurice Berger, "The Critique of Pure Racism: An Interview with Adrian Piper," *Afterimage* (October 1990), Vol. 18, No. 3).

38. Barbara Christian makes the point in Marlon Rigg's documentary *Ethnic Notions*, as does Michelle Wallace in "Slaves of History," in *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory* (London: Verso, 1990).

39. Joao Carlos Rodrigues, *O Negro no Cinema Brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Globo, 1988), p. 58 (translation mine).

40. These issues are further explored in Ella Shohat/Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994).

41. See Randal Johnson's thorough and illuminating analysis in "Cinema Novo and Cannibalism: *Macunaíma*," in Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, *Brazilian Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), as well as my "Of Cannibals and Carnivals" in *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism and Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1989).

The Rise and Fall of Brazilian Cinema, 1960–1990

Randal Johnson

It was easy to chase the public away from the cinema; it's difficult to bring it back.

Júlio Bressane

Either we internationalize Brazilian cinema or they will internationalize us.

Murilo Salles

Brazilian cinema is dead.

Arnaldo Jabor

Introduction

From almost its very beginnings the Brazilian film industry has suffered a chronic lack of continuity, causing it to develop erratically, either in isolated and short-lived cycles far from the country's major metropolitan centers (e.g., the efforts, in the 1920s, of Humberto Mauro in Cataguases, Gentil Ruiz in Recife, or Eduardo Abelim in Porto Alegre), or in unsuccessful attempts at industrialization based on a studio model (Cinédia in the 1930s, Atlântida in the early 1940s, Vera Cruz in the late 1940s). This lack of continuity is also evident in the careers of many Brazilian filmmakers, some of whom have appeared with great promise only to make subsequent films with tremendous difficulty, if at all. The example of Lima Barreto, whose

IRIS No. 13 (Summer 1991), pp. 97–124. Reprinted by permission of the author.

O cangaceiro (1953) was a double prize-winner in Cannes, is a case in point.[1]

Recognizing the historical lack of continuity in Brazilian cinema and the inadequacy of a Hollywood-style studio model in a country with such a small domestic market, the internationally-acclaimed Cinema Novo sought, starting in the early 1960s, to develop new modes of cinematic production, opting for an *auteur* cinema based on an independent and inexpensive mode of production using, initially, small crews, location shooting, and non-professional actors. Cinema Novo represented not only a new start for Brazilian cinema, but also a new definition of the social role of the cinema, no longer conceived as a mere form of entertainment, but rather as a mode of artistic and cultural intervention in the country's socio-historical conjuncture. As such, it became an important site of resistance against the military regime imposed on the country in 1964. In the 1970s, Cinema Novo's alliance with the state through Embrafilme (Empresa Brasileira de Filmes) created a situation in which it seemed that Brazilian cinema would finally manage to solidify itself as an industry with the real potential for self-sufficiency.[2]

Yet today, thirty years after Cinema Novo first appeared on the scene with its harsh portrayals of Brazilian reality and twenty-one years after the founding of Embrafilme, the national film industry faces the most severe crisis of its history. Brazilian film production is now at its lowest level since the early 1940s, with no more than a dozen feature-length films underway.[3] Even worse, between 1981 and 1988, hardcore pornography accounted for an average of almost 68 percent of total production (Table 1). In 1988, 20 of the 30 top-drawing Brazilian films were pornographic (Table 2).[4]

In terms of the size of the market, the number of theaters in the country dropped from 3,276 in 1975 to less than 1,100 in 1988. Attendance figures for Brazilian films dropped from 1978's high of 60 million to less than 24 million in 1988. During the same period, the total number of spectators in the Brazilian market for both foreign and national films dropped from around 211.5 million to 108.5 million (Table 3). Attendance figures for 1984 represent only 43% of the 1978 figure (Concine 13).

Brazilian cinema is in many ways back to square one, a retrocession echoed—but not caused—by Fernando Collor de Mello's extinction of Embrafilme, Concine (the Conselho Nacional do Cinema) and the Fundaçao Brasileira de Cinema in one of his first acts as Brazil's first democratically-elected president since 1960. Given the increasing depth of the crisis that has faced Brazilian cinema over the past decade, Collor's action was more symbolic than real in its effects, since

TABLE 1
Brazilian Film Production, 1978–1988

YEAR	TOTAL	PORNOGRAPHIC	EMBRAFILME	OTHERS	%PORN
1978	100	15	13	72	15
1979	93	07	16	70	08
1980	103	32	18	53	31
1981	80	63	16	01	79
1982	85	59	22	04	69
1983	84	62	18	04	74
1984	90	64	22	04	71
1985	87	59	na	na	68
1986	112	69	na	na	62
1987	82	43	na	na	52
1988	90	68	na	na	76

SOURCE: Embrafilme, *Jornal da tela*, Ediçao especial ("Proposta para uma politica nacional do cinema"), March 1986, p. 3. Concine, *Relatório de atividades*, Segundo Semestre 1988 (1989): 219–23.

Embrafilme had long since ceased to be an effective agency of film industry development and, as filmmaker Eduardo Escorel has put it, its investments in the industry had largely ceased to be recognized as socially legitimate. One might say that yet another cycle has come to an end.

Over the past few years, numerous commentators, including many film industry professionals, have attempted to analyze the crisis and to offer potential solutions. Most point out quite correctly that in immediate terms the current crisis of Brazilian cinema reflects the larger crisis of the national economy in a period when the so-called economic "miracle" of the 1967–1973 period, characterized by high growth rates and relatively low inflation, was replaced by an economic nightmare with a 100 billion dollar foreign debt and near hyperinflation. The economic crisis forced the government to impose severe restrictions on imports, making film production costs rise dramatically and accentuating what is often called the "dollarization" of the film production process. Film production costs increased rapidly at a time when the market was shrinking, thus accelerating the process of decline, and ticket prices, which have long been controlled by the government, have not kept pace with inflation, further reducing the industry's income. The constant and massive presence of foreign—largely North American—films in the domestic market has only served to exacerbate the situation.

TABLE 2
Top-Drawing Brazilian Films, 1988

TITLE	SPECTATORS
1. Os heróis Trapalhoes	3,080,000
2. Os fantasmas Trapalhoes	2,689,380
3. Super Xuxa contra o Baixo Astral	1,627,667
4. O casamento dos Trapalhoes	1,351,038
5. Banana split	716,530
6. A menina do lado	490,271
7. Feliz ano velho	468,021
8. Luzia homem	345,876
9. Os Trapalhoes no Auto da Compadecida	233,930
10. As aventuras de Sérgio Malandro	222,936
11. A dama do Cine Shangai	195,861
12. Eles comem crú	177,298
13. Dedé Mamata	162,387
14. Coisas eróticas	162,387
15. O delicioso sabor do sexo	157,345
16. Senta no meu que eu entro no teu	147,291
17. No calor do buraco	142,810
18. Eternamente Pagu	141,253
19. Gemidos e sussurros	137,627
20. Aluga-se moças	115,824

(Note: Some films were originally released prior to 1988. In these cases, figures do not represent total number of spectators.)

SOURCE: Concine, *Relatório de atividades*, Segundo Semestre 1988 (1989): 12.

Many additional reasons exist for the decline of the Brazilian film industry since the early 1980s. High inflation rates have made filmgoing a luxury for much of the Brazilian population. Television, which has been so successful during this same period (due in part to considerable infrastructural public sector investments in the telecommunications industry), has provided Brazilians with inexpensive yet generally high-quality entertainment in the comfort of their homes. At the same time, unlike the United States and Western Europe, television has not provided the national film industry with a significant additional source of income since historically there has been little integration between the two media. By and large, the Brazilian television industry either produces its own programming—there have been few co-productions with the film industry—or broadcasts imported programming. It has rarely provided space for independent production, including that of the national cinema. In 1984, of 1,967 feature-length films shown on Brazilian television stations, only 82 were Brazilian.[5]

TABLE 3
Film Spectators in Brazil, 1974–1988

YEAR	BRAZILIAN FILMS	%	FOREIGN FILMS	%	TOTAL
1974	30,665,000	16	170,625,000	84	201,290,000
1975	48,859,000	18	226,521,000	82	275,380,000
1976	52,046,000	21	198,484,000	79	250,530,000
1977	50,937,000	25	157,398,000	75	208,335,000
1978	61,854,000	30	149,802,000	70	211,656,000
1979	55,836,000	29	136,072,000	71	191,908,000
1980	50,689,000	31	114,085,000	69	164,774,000
1981	45,911,000	33	92,981,000	67	138,892,000
1982	44,965,000	36	82,948,000	64	127,913,000
1983	33,774,000	32	72,762,000	68	106,536,000
1984	30,638,000	34	59,301,000	66	89,939,000
1985	21,928,000	24	69,372,000	76	91,300,000
1986	29,337,000	23	98,266,000	77	127,603,000
1987	25,123,713	21	91,806,019	79	116,929,732
1988	23,987,515	23	84,580,576	77	108,568,091

SOURCE: Concine, *Relatório de atividades*, Segundo Semestre 1988 (1989): 12.

But the crisis goes beyond mere economic considerations. Many commentators have pointed to the relationship between cinema and the state as a major contributing factor, focusing primarily on the corporativist and paternalistic nature of that relationship as it developed over the last twenty-five years. Along these lines I have argued elsewhere that the crisis represents the bankruptcy of the state-supported model of film production that led Brazilian cinema, in the mid-1970s, to truly remarkable levels of success, a model that did not derive from a far-sighted vision of the future of Brazilian cinema, and was authoritarian in many of its particulars, especially in relation to the exhibition sector (*The Film Industry in Brazil*). Although the policy contributed to the viability of many important film projects, including most of the Brazilian films distributed in the U.S. in recent years, it ultimately failed to reconcile the state's cultural and industrial responsibilities vis-à-vis the cinema and contributed to the meteoric fall of the Brazilian film industry during the last several years.

In this essay I will attempt to put the crisis in perspective, discussing in some detail a number of its fundamental causes. My focus will be on the shift in state policy toward the cinema in the early 1970s within the context of other cultural initiatives of the regime of General Ernesto Geisel and, in a broader sense, the political conjuncture which contributed to the shift. I will argue that the policy failed primarily because of its clientelistic nature, which led it to respond to the de-

mands of clients who occupied dominant positions in the cinematic field rather than attend to the real needs of the industry and provide infrastructural support which could have strengthened the industry as a whole. In addition, without placing blame or denigrating the multiple accomplishments of the Cinema Novo movement, I will suggest that the roots of this orientation are to be found in Cinema Novo's (and, by extension, Brazilian cinema's) insistence on an auteur model of cinematic practice and on the anti-industrialism of the movement's earliest phase, both of which contributed to a marked increase in hostility between the production and exhibition sectors.

The story of the rise and fall of Brazilian cinema is thus one filled with paradoxes, not the least of which is the alliance between a radical and highly creative film movement and the authoritarian state. Equally paradoxical is the fact that government support of the industry would come into being only during a period of military rule opposed by most sectors of the industry and that it has waned following the reinstitution of a more democratic system of government. It is also paradoxical, at the very least, that the state model of support for the film industry ultimately had a result that was precisely the opposite of its original intentions.

Although the state claimed that its goal was to make the cinema more competitive in its own market, the screen quota and the various forms of financial assistance it provided in fact suspended the rules of the marketplace for national films, which ceased to compete against foreign films in the domestic market and began to compete against each other in the reserve market. Embrafilme became the major source of production financing, creating a situation of dependence between the state and so-called "independent" filmmakers, and it itself became a marketplace where filmmakers competed against each other for the right to make films, thus exacerbating tensions within the industry and creating a situation in which the play of influences was often more important than the talent of the filmmaker or producer.[6] It is equally paradoxical that one of the few solutions to the crisis now appears to be association with foreign companies or with national exhibition groups, both of which have long been considered "enemies" of Brazilian cinema.

Cinema and the State in Brazil: A Historical Overview

To put the discussion in context, a brief overview of the historical development of state policy toward the film industry is in order. State intervention in the film industry dates from the early 1930s, when Getúlio Vargas implemented the first of what would turn out to be a

long series of protectionist measures, most in the form of a screen quota for national films, designed to give the industry a modicum of stability for future development in a market long dominated by foreign cinemas.[7] Since the 1930s, and especially after 1964, the state role evolved from that of regulator of market forces to active agent and productive force in the industry, especially through its various programs of film production financing (low-interest loans, advances on distribution, and co-production with private companies).

The state began its direct financial support of the film industry in 1966 with the creation of the Instituto Nacional do Cinema. The Institute, created by an executive decree of the Castello Branco regime, was the result of a long struggle by most sectors of the film industry (Johnson, *The Film Industry in Brazil* 107–12). It administered three major programs of support: first, a subsidy program providing all national films exhibited with additional income based on box-office receipts; second, a program of additional cash awards for "quality" films, selected by a jury of critics and film industry professionals; and, third, a film-financing program in which the Institute administered co-productions between foreign distributors and local producers using funds withheld from the distributor's income tax.[8] Although the first two were ultimately inadequate in terms of the amount of additional income offered, these programs were available for all interested filmmakers and thus tended to support the production sector as a whole.

The co-production program ended in 1969 with the creation of Embrafilme, which was originally intended to promote the distribution of Brazilian films in foreign markets, and the funds withheld from the distributor's income tax became a major source of the agency's budget. As early as 1970 Embrafilme began granting producers low-interest loans for film production financing, and between 1970 and 1979, when the loan program was phased out, Embrafilme partially financed over 25 percent of total national production in this manner. Carlos Diegues's *Bye Bye Brasil* (1980) was the last film financed under this program.

As initially formulated, decisions to grant production financing were ostensibly made on purely technical grounds, taking into consideration the size of the company, its production history, the number of awards it had won in national and international festivals, and its experience. Such a policy may seem reasonable for most economic sectors or most industries, but the film industry is different in that its product transmits cultural, social, and ideological values, and such "neutrality" was seen as unacceptable by many segments of Brazilian society. The influential *O Estado de São Paulo*, for example, editorialized on 28 January 1972 that Embrafilme should *not* be a merely technical agen-

cy, but rather should finance only films of high quality which contribute to the "moral foundations" of Brazilian society. Since a more neutral policy designed to foster Brazilian cinema as a whole led to the production of films deemed undesirable by many social sectors, including the military—and here I refer to the rash of *pornochanchadas* (erotic comedies) that began to appear in the early 1970s, many partially financed by the state—a reformulation of Embrafilme's production policy became inevitable.

The Reorientation of State Cinematic Policy

In 1975, during the Geisel regime, Embrafilme was reorganized and at that time absorbed the executive functions of the now-defunct INC. The Conselho Nacional do Cinema (Concine) was created the following year to assume INC's legislative role.[9] In 1973 Embrafilme had created its own nationwide distributor, long a goal of Brazilian producers, and in 1974 it initiated a program of co-production financing that gradually replaced the loan program. As initially formulated, the enterprise participated in selected film projects with up to 30 percent of total production costs and received in return a 30 percent share of profits. With an advance on distribution of another 30 percent, the state could cover up to 60 percent of a film's production costs. In the late 1970s, Embrafilme began providing up to 100 percent of a film's financing in some cases.[10]

Several factors explain the shift in state policy toward the film industry. I have already mentioned the fact that the state cinematic apparatus had come under severe criticism from diverse sectors of civil society and the state because of its financing of films of questionable quality. From a different angle, Renato Ortiz sees increased state investments in culture (including the cinema) during the 1973–1975 period as one result of the economic optimism produced by the "miracle" of 1967–1973 as reflected in the Second National Development Plan (1974). Previous governments had focused primarily on economic aspects of development, although they had given lip service to the need for the "humanization of development" or for "psychosocial development" to accompany economic development. The Geisel regime, according to this analysis, attempted to put such ideas into action and thus gave more attention to the area of culture (Ortiz 82).

Although there is no doubt some truth in Ortiz's interpretation, other factors are clearly of equal or greater importance. The years between 1969 and 1975 were the most repressive of military rule. Sparked by an impasse in its constitutional relationship with congress,

on 13 December 1968 the Costa e Silva regime decreed the Fifth Institutional Act, which "granted the president authority to recess legislative bodies, to intervene in the states without limit, to cancel elective mandates and suspend constitutional guarantees . . . [including] the right of habeas corpus" (Schneider 274). The AI-5 led to the imposition of the harshest censorship yet known in Brazil and forced a number of political leaders, intellectuals and artists, including some filmmakers, into exile. The appearance of armed movements in opposition to the regime led, in turn, to the institutionalization of torture and a national campaign by the military against "subversion."

This period of repression and censorship exacerbated the military's crisis of legitimacy, especially in relation to the intellectual/cultural field, and the increased activity in the cultural arena can be interpreted as one response to this crisis. In August, 1973, General Médici's minister of Education and Culture, Jarbas Passarinho, initiated a Program of Cultural Action which, according to Sérgio Miceli, was designed to provide financial (and political) credit to some areas of cultural production that had previously been ignored by the government and which constituted an official attempt to improve relations with artistic and intellectual circles (56). Film producer Luis Carlos Barreto, who was closely associated with Cinema Novo from the beginning, has explained that the reformulation of Embrafilme's program of production financing in the early 1970s grew out of conversations he and other film industry professionals, especially those associated with the Cinema Novo group, had during this period with Jarbas Passarinho (*Jornal da tela*, March 1990, 14).[11]

The state's attention to culture intensified under the Geisel regime with the creation of Funarte (Fundaçao Nacional de Arte), the revitalization of the Serviço Nacional de Teatro, the reorganization of Embrafilme, the creation of Concine, and the publication of the document "Política nacional de cultura," which formalized the regime's cultural policy (Ministério de Educaçao e Cultura).[12] The cultural offensive in the mid-1970s focused primarily on those areas—the plastic arts, music, theater, and the cinema—with a reduced market potential and a more personalized or even artisan mode of production (Miceli 64).

Geisel's Minister of Education and Culture Ney Braga managed to recruit cultural administrators who were either identified with the left of the cultural field or who had the confidence of the left (Roberto Farias and Gustavo Dahl in Embrafilme, Orlando Miranda in the SNT, Manuel Diegues Jr.—filmmaker Carlos Diegues's father—in the Departamento de Assuntos Culturais, which functioned as an umbrella agency within MEC with responsibility for overseeing all of the government's cultural activities). The optimism that reigned in the cul-

tural field at this time, despite the repression, was due in part to the feeling among different cultural sectors that they not only had the support of the government but that they were finally able to influence the shape of state policy toward their respective areas:

> Carlos Diegues (1975): "The current government has shown, in contrast to all other post-Vargas administrations, that it has a program for a cinematic infrastructure, and this is fundamental. I believe in Embrafilme's mission and in the aims of its current leadership, although I know that there are still many things to improve or create" ("As esperanças").
>
> Nelson Pereira dos Santos (1977): "All artists, not only in cinema but in theater and popular music also, who are considered to be of the left . . . were obligated to be more flexible, and we participated with independent producers on a common program and were able to place Roberto Farias, himself a filmmaker, as president of Embrafilme. Therefore, in reality, cinema today is a 'front populaire' . . . We do not participate in the decision making, but we have a great influence in the composition of forces within Embrafilme. . . ." (Johnson, "Toward a Popular Cinema" 228)

Miceli correctly points out that the success of this cultural offensive would have been impossible without a strong minister of Education and Culture with legitimacy in both the military government and the cultural field. A retired army general, Ney Braga's political career was consolidated through successive electoral victories in the state of Paraná (mayor of Curitiba [1954], federal deputy [1958], state governor [1960]) and service in non-military positions of the post-1964 period (he was minister of Agriculture under Castello Branco). In Paraná his political legacy included many important cultural initiatives, including the Fundaçao Educacional do Paraná, the Teatro Guaíra, and the Companhia Oficial de Teatro.

In addition, he was the central figure in what was then considered to be one of the strong civilian political "clans" in the country, which included such government officials as Karlos Rischbieter (president of the Banco do Brasil), Reinhold Stephanes (director of the Brazilian social security system), and Maurício Schulmann (director of the Banco Nacional de Habitaçao), among others. Together, Braga's group was said to control almost half of the national budget. The group also counted on the support of then secretary of Planning, Joao Paulo dos Reis Velloso, who was seminal in obtaining increased funding for Embrafilme (64–66).[13] This strong government support contributed significantly to the remarkable success of the Brazilian film industry in the late 1970s. Unfortunately, neither the support nor the success lasted.

The co-production program described above marked a fundamental redirection in state policy toward the industry, much in line with what producers had proposed to Jarbas Passarinho in 1972. With this program, the granting of production financing became much more selective. When the state decides to co-produce a limited number of films, it must inevitably decide *which* Brazilian cinema it will support. This causes the state, on the one hand, to enter into competition with non-favored sectors of the industry and, on the other, to become a site of contention for competing groups. The reorientation of the state's financial assistance to the industry exacerbated conflicting positions among filmmakers (Ramos, chapter 4).

Two conflicts are particularly relevant to the present discussion: cultural versus commercial views of the state role, and "independent" versus concentrationist views of the proper industrial model the state should support. On the cultural side were filmmakers who felt that the state should support films based on their cultural importance, with no regard to commercial potential. In Brazilian film circles, this kind of film is known as a *miúra*. At the extreme of this position were documentarists such as Sílvio Tendler (*Os anos JK, Jango*) and some state bureaucrats who wanted Embrafilme limited to the production of cultural and educational films, much like the Instituto Nacional do Cinema Educativo, which was created by Getúlio Vargas in 1937 and later absorbed into INC. On the other side of this conflict were filmmakers and producers who thought that commercial potential should be the only thing that concerned the state enterprise in its attempts to support the industry's development. Pedro Rovai, known as a producer and director of *pornochanchadas*, argued that Embrafilme should finance production companies, much as the state does in other economic sectors, and not individual film projects. He saw the cultural/commercial division as a false dichotomy and believed, quite correctly, that once a film is projected on screen it transmits cultural values (Bernardet, *Cinema brasileiro*, 57).

The idea that only commercial potential should be considered derives from the notion, oft-repeated by exhibitors, that the public is the final judge of the value of cultural production. Such a notion does not consider historical distortions in the transmission and reception of cultural goods in a dependent, peripheral context. When film production began in Brazil on a fairly large scale after the turn of the century, the formal uses to which the highly technical cinematic apparatus could be put had already been largely determined. The early domination of the Brazilian market by foreign film industries fostered in the audi-

ence certain expectations concerning a film's quality as the foreign film became the standard against which all films would be judged. Although Brazilian films were relatively successful in the domestic market in the first decade of the century, they were by and large unable to attain the production values of foreign films and thus came to be seen by the Brazilian public as of poor quality and unworthy of support. The massive presence of foreign—largely American—films in the Brazilian market has tended to reinforce audience bias in their favor. This creates, for the Brazilian filmmaker, the dilemma of whether to imitate foreign films or attempt to create new modes of cinematic discourse based on what he or she perceives to be "national" values. The cultural/commercial dichotomy is one expression of this complex and perhaps unresolvable dilemma.[14]

Acutely aware of this dilemma, some directors, such filmmakers as Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Carlos Diegues, Arnaldo Jabor, Leon Hirszman, Geraldo Sarno, Tizuka Yamasaki and Hector Babenco, among others, attempted with varying degrees of success to combine the cultural and the commercial, making films that spoke to the Brazilian people in culturally relevant terms and were also successful at the box office. Embrafilme attempted to please both camps. It set up programs for the production of cultural films and documentaries and financed beginning directors and others such as Rocha and Júlio Bressane, whose films have limited commercial appeal.

The "independent"/concentrationist split grows out of the cultural/commercial dichotomy. "Independent" filmmakers have no firm commercial structure and few sources of production financing other than the state, and yet they have contributed decisively to the critical success of Brazilian cinema over the last twenty years.[15] Their production companies often consist of little more than a small office, a desk, and a telephone. They normally do not own complete filmmaking equipment, yet they constitute the vast majority of Brazilian cinematic activity.[16] Although they are not opposed to making successful films, they see commercial success as secondary to cultural or social relevance. By financing individual films rather than production companies, Embrafilme tended to support these "independent" filmmakers, reinforcing an atomized model of production rather than turning, as did Mexico, to a production model based on large studios.

In the 1970s the concentrationist group, and I use the term "group" very loosely, gained considerable strength and power within Embrafilme. The group is composed of medium-sized production companies which have complete or almost complete filmmaking facilities and fairly large and permanent staffs. Unlike the "independents," they normally produce several films a year (sometimes by "independents"), often in partnership with private investors, both national and foreign. They called on Embrafilme to adopt a more entrepreneurial attitude leading to increased capital accumulation in the industry. As a means to that end, they favored the concentration of Embrafilme's resources in a few films with strong commercial potential. Some of them wanted Embrafilme, or at least its profitable sectors, to be sold to private concerns.[17]

The existence of such tensions, when set against the traditionally clientelistic nature of the Brazilian state, of which the agency was part, resulted in a general lack of direction in Embrafilme's policy. Since the state's precise role in relation to the film industry was never truly defined, Embrafilme tried to be too many things to too many people, often under the forms of political pressure inherent in a clientelistic framework, the result being that it did few things as well as it might have been able to do under different circumstances and with different operating principles. Embrafilme made viable many important film projects and contributed decisively to Brazilian cinema's becoming, for a brief period, the premier cinema in Latin America, but its policies obviously did not lead to the consolidation of Brazilian cinema as a self-sustaining industry.[18]

Among the perhaps unintended effects of state policy toward the film industry were the bureaucratization of cinematic practice and a dramatic increase in production costs. The former, which led, in objective terms, to Brazilian cinema being an officially sanctioned cinema (i.e., sanctioned by the state), is evident in the number of certificates a film needed to be recognized as a film, to benefit from cinematic legislation, and to legally enter the exhibition circuit. According to the legislation compiled by Alcino Teixeira de Mello, among such certificates have been a Censorship Certificate, a Certificate for Compulsory Exhibition, a Certificate of Origin, a Certificate of Brazilian Production, a Certificate-Guide for the obligatory "contribution" for film industry development, and a Certificate of Registration. In other words, a film does not exist as such in Brazil until legally recognized by the state bureaucracy.

On at least one occasion this process became a *de facto* form of censorship. In 1975 Jorge Bodansky and Orlando Senna co-directed *Iracema*. The film was shot in 16mm using a type of stock that Brazilian laboratories were apparently ill-equipped to develop. Consequently, the film was developed in West Germany, where the film had been picked up for distribution on German television. Since it was not developed in Brazil, the film did not technically conform to the legal definition of a "Brazilian film" and was therefore denied the necessary

Certificate of Brazilian Production, without which it could not be exhibited in the country. *Iracema* thus entered a sort of catch-22 situation; it could not be exhibited as a Brazilian film and enjoy the rights thereof (e.g., participation in the reserve market under the protectionist compulsory exhibition statutes), nor could it be submitted as a foreign film, since it was obviously Brazilian. The bureaucratic interdiction lasted until 1980 when it was finally released by Embrafilme as a Brazilian film. It also won top honors in that year's Embrafilme-sponsored Brasília Film Festival. Although bureaucrats argued that the film's interdiction was a technical, legal matter, there is no doubt that its controversial nature had something to do with its problems with the state.

Another effect of the shift in policy toward the financing of selected film projects was, it is often said, to "socialize losses and privatize profits" (Schild). Since the state assumed the lion's share of the financial risk involved in film production, many directors and producers tended to be less concerned with keeping costs down and, at least to some extent, with public acceptance of their films. This problem was compounded by the political favoritism or clientelism that came to characterize the selection process. Many critics and filmmakers have commented on the situation:

> Sérgio Augusto: "The worst thing was the damage caused by the corporative and cartorial policy [Embrafilme] fostered. Access to whatever funds were available for production was only easy —and at times too easy—for those who had political contacts or who screamed the loudest. Talent for making good or successful films became a secondary factor in Embrafilme's entrance exams."
>
> Hermano Penna: "Embrafilme has a paternalistic relationship [with the industry], with the total collusion of cinematographic professionals, because their relationship to the agency is not clear, partly because a film industry has never really been established in Brazil. It's a two way street: the agency paternalizes, but filmmakers also have a tendency to expect it" (*Jornal da tela*, March 1990, 13).
>
> Júlio Bressane: "Embrafilme preserved and exacerbated all the defects of state enterprises: nepotism, malversation, overcharging, in sum, all the characteristics of an organized gang, and it thus chased the public away from the cinema and destroyed the market" (*Jornal da tela*, March 1990, 14).
>
> Luiz Paulino dos Santos: "Another thing that is terrible in Embrafilme, besides the fact that one administration simply reverses the policies of the previous one, is the lack of criteria in the choice of productions, which are always selected in the most subjective way possible by special interest groups" (*Jornal da tela*, March 1990, 15).
>
> Eduardo Escorel: [Even after its 1987 reorganization] "the paternalistic nature of state support continued, through subsidized investments with no hope for return given the conditions of the market. Embrafilme's public image ended in tatters after being bombarded for years by accusations of favoritism and having even the legality of its operations questioned. Even so, filmmakers refused to admit that the agency had a fatal illness. Tested chameleons, directors and producers tried to go about business as usual as if nothing had happened. Despite their chronic dissatisfaction, they preferred to maintain their relationship of dependency with the state instead of admitting that Embrafilme . . . had ceased to serve the true interests of Brazilian cinema. Struggling to reach an illusory life raft—the signing of a contract with Embrafilme—they continued to participate in the farce: while they cursed Embrafilme in public, in private they fought tooth and nail for their slice of its meager resources. On the one hand the agency approved projects with no apparent criteria; on the other filmmakers were pressured to sign contracts they could not fulfill" ("Cinema e estado").[19]

Embrafilme's co-production program undeniably improved the technical quality of Brazilian cinema—virtually all of the Brazilian films exhibited in the United States during the last decade were produced under such programs—but by doing so it allowed production costs to be inflated to levels far above the market potential for return in the domestic market. According to Concine's own calculation, at an average cost of $500,000 a film would need to be seen by 1,800,000 paying spectators to break even. In 1988 only two films, both by the Trapalhoes comedy team, reached that level, although a third, *Super Xuxa contra o Baixo Astral*, came close (Table 2; Concine 130–31). While the process of rapidly increasing production costs was taking place, Embrafilme/Concine did little to improve and strengthen the industry's infrastructure. Its focus, at least in terms of financial support for the industry, was almost exclusively on production and on its own distribution sector.

By the mid-1980s, it become clear that the existing mode of state-supported cinematic production was obsolete and transformation of the relationship between cinema and the state was necessary. The urgency of the restructuring became clear, and Embrafilme once again the object of severe public criticism and debate, when the *Folha de São Paulo* published, in early 1986, a series of articles on the enter-

prise's management.[20] In an editorial titled "Cine catástrofe," (20 March 1986), the newspaper referred to Embrafilme's activities as a "moral, economic, and artistic disaster." Many film industry professionals recognized the need for a reevaluation of the relationship between cinema and the state. Cinema Novo veteran Carlos Diegues (*Bye Bye Brasil*), for example, referred to the enterprise as a "cultural Medicaid system that treats cancer with bandaids," and Embrafilme director Carlos Augusto Calil (1985–1987) asserted that the state could no longer attempt to substitute for private enterprise and that the existing model was simply no longer viable.[21]

Although minor changes in policy had occurred throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the next major attempt at transformation took place during the Sarney administration, with Celso Furtado as minister of Culture. Sarney restructured Embrafilme, separating its cultural and commercial activities, by creating a mixed-ownership enterprise (Embrafilme—Distribuidora de Filmes S.A.) housing all of the firm's commercial activities, and transferring its other sectors into a foundation (Fundaçao Brasileira de Cinema). In the past, some 15 percent of Embrafilme's capital has been designated for non-profit cultural activities, creating what many feel to be a financial burden on an enterprise designed to engaged in entrepreneurial activities in support of the national industry *qua* industry. Even under this new structure, Embrafilme's fundamental orientation—the support of individual film projects rather than the industry as a whole—remained unchanged, and the general situation of the Brazilian film industry continued to deteriorate.[22]

The Exhibitor as Enemy

One of the major reasons for the crisis, and one that has not yet received the serious public discussion it deserves, is the tension, if not outright antagonism, between the state-supported production sector and the exhibition sector. This antagonism goes back to the very beginnings of Brazilian cinema. In the early 1900s producers and exhibitors were normally one and the same. The development of independent distributors drove a wedge between producers and exhibitors, and the exhibition sector began to function almost exclusively for the benefit of foreign cinemas. In the 1930s, exhibition groups fought legislation initiating a timid screen quota for Brazilian short films, just as they have fought every attempt to expand the quota until today, arguing free trade and open markets in opposition to state intervention and manipulation of the rules of the marketplace.

Without a screen quota and other protectionist measures, Brazilian cinema very likely would have existed only on the most crass commercial basis. At the same time, state policy toward the film industry clearly contributed to a loss of profits for exhibitors and was at least partially responsible for the decline of the exhibition sector, which has been pernicious for the Brazilian film industry as a whole.

The relationship between the state and the exhibition sector deteriorated steadily over the last two decades and especially since the reorientation of state policy toward the industry described above. In 1974, *O Estado de São Paulo* ran an article with the headline "The Great Duel of National Cinema," referring to the duel between exhibitors and state-supported producers as analogous to a Western movie, with the producer as hero, the exhibitor as villain, and the state as sheriff. The "duel" would by 1980 become a "war," fought largely in the courts, as exhibition groups, sometimes in conjunction with distributors, continually filed suit and frequently obtained at least temporary injunctions against various aspects of state policy, especially the compulsory exhibition law (screen quota). In its report for the second half of 1988, Concine lists suits filed by thirty-two exhibition companies (not counting multiple co-litigants) representing over 10 percent of the total number of theaters in Brazil (Concine 314–17).

The "war" between exhibitors and producers was fought not only in the courts, but also in the theaters. Jorge Schnitman suggests that "historically, whenever exhibitors were forced to exhibit a large number of national films, they attempted to produce their own" (67 n. 1). As early as 1971, exhibition groups began joining together to form production companies with the expressed intention of making films to meet the requirements of the compulsory exhibition law. The result was the rash of poor-quality *pornochanchadas* that began to flood the reserve market in 1972–1973, leaving even less room for more culturally serious films. In the 1980s, such production would become even more noxious as the soft-core pornochanchada was replaced by hard-core pornography. Table 1 not only indicates the astonishingly high percentage of pornographic films after 1980, but also the inexistence of independent sources of film production financing and the almost total dependence of the production sector on either exhibitors (i.e., pornography) or the state.

Rather than go into more detail or discuss the merits of exhibitors' arguments, it is important to summarize legislation regarding the exhibition sector to attain an at least partial understanding of its situation. Brazilian cinematic legislation stipulates that exhibitors must show national films at least 140 days per year, regardless of the number of Brazilian films produced in a given year or the quality of those films.

Although exhibitors negotiate with distributors of foreign films, they are obligated to pay a minimum of 50 percent of net income for Brazilian films, and they must make payment within fifteen days of exhibition. They must show a national short subject as part of each program of foreign films, purchase standardized tickets and box-office income recording sheets from Embrafilme at inflated prices, and keep Brazilian films in exhibition as long as the average of total spectators for two weeks or more equals 60 percent of the previous year's weekly average.

In return, exhibitors have received virtually nothing from the state except the disdain which has long characterized producers' attitudes toward the sector. Although it was among Embrafilme's attributes to attend to the needs of the sector, it refused to divert funds from production and did not even provide subsidies or low-interest loans to help them renovate their equipment and theaters. The result of the authoritarian imposition of these unwelcome measures has been a decline in income and a deteriorating sector which has led to the closing of many theaters, especially in the interior of the country, and to the current crisis of Brazilian cinema. The proof of the failure of state policy toward the exhibition sector—and toward Brazilian cinema as a whole—is the dramatic decline in the number of theaters in operation in the country, now slightly over 1,000 for a country of 140 million. Today the only films that can cover costs in such a small market are children's films using popular television stars as actors (Xuxa, Sérgio Malandro, the Trapalhoes).

Cinema Novo, Exhibitors, and the Public

If the politically radical Cinema Novo movement was able to reach at least a tacit understanding with certain segments of the military regime regarding film production financing and the creation of a nationwide distributor within the framework offered by Embrafilme, why, then, was it unable to effect a rapprochement with the exhibition sector on mutually beneficial grounds? It would be simplistic to lay blame exclusively on the relationship between exhibitors and foreign film distributors, although there can be no doubt that that relationship has been a major contributing factor. For a full understanding, one must also go back to the origins of Cinema Novo, especially its attitude toward modes of cinematic practice and toward traditional film industry structures, and to the internal dynamics of the movement as it evolved in the 1960s.

An integral part of Cinema Novo's conception of social action through the cinema was a new attitude toward the development of the national film industry, based on a rejection of the studio model, which had failed so dismally with Vera Cruz, and an insistence on the importance of an auteur model. In his seminal 1963 book *Revisao crítica do cinema brasileiro*, Glauber Rocha aligns himself and the movement with the French Nouvelle Vague and its struggle to free itself from the rigidity of industrial cinema and its norms, while at the same time politicizing the Nouvelle Vague's concept of *auteur*. The auteur, according to Rocha, revolts against the mercantilist mentality of industrial cinema, which puts profitability and easy communication above art. Rocha proposed an opposition between "commercial cinema," equated with illusionistic technique and untruth, and "auteur cinema," characterized by freedom of expression and a dedication to truth.

Cinema Novo thus rejected the studio system, a model borrowed from the "metropolis," as being dedicated by definition to the falsification of reality. Because of an extreme scarcity of finance capital for film production, Cinema Novo could not hope to equal the technical level of most foreign films. So rather than imitate dominant cinema, which would make their work merely symptomatic of underdevelopment, they chose to resist by turning, in Ismail Xavier's words, "scarcity into a signifier" (18). The critical realism of films marked by the "aesthetic of hunger" served an important tactical and political function by expressing the radical "otherness" of Brazilian cinema in relation to world cinema. In short, as part of their project for "decolonizing" Brazilian cinema and attempting to create a critical consciousness in the Brazilian people in opposition to the alienated consciousness supposedly fostered by Hollywood, Cinema Novo adopted a new attitude toward the industrial development of Brazilian cinema and a new attitude toward film aesthetics, privileging ideas over technical perfection, politics over commercial potential.

Despite the movement's real contributions along these lines, a paradox also appears in its strategies. Although it opposed traditional modes of cinematic production and the aesthetic forms accompanying them, its participants made no real attempt to create alternative or parallel exhibition circuits. Rather, they released their films in established commercial circuits which had been built primarily for the exhibition of foreign films. The Brazilian public, long conditioned by Hollywood's products, was generally unreceptive to the films of Cinema Novo, which became in many ways a group of films made by and for an intellectual elite and not for broad sectors of the Brazilian people or even of the film-going public.

Filmmaker Gustavo Dahl discussed the relationship between Cinema Novo, the public, and exhibitors in two 1966 articles, "Cinema

Novo e estruturas econômicas tradicionais," and "Cinema Novo e seu público." In the first, Dahl argues that the Cinema Novo's initial success among intellectual elites allowed its participants to glimpse "the possibility of *making the old structures of Brazilian cinema collapse* through a strategy of internal prestige and commercial success abroad . . . [It] was a question of destroying the artistic and cultural vices of [Brazilian] cinema from the inside out" (197; stress added). Using the prestige gained in international film festivals, the movement's participants began making their first features with money from private patrons or borrowed from banker José Luís de Magalhaes Lins's Banco de Minas Gerais. But "since the new filmmakers found themselves unconnected to the traditional structures of the Brazilian market—*'et pour cause'*—nothing could prevent the repetition of the errors of São Paulo's attempt at studio-based industrialization: the production of films that had no guarantee of exhibition" (197). In other words, Cinema Novo hoped to destroy traditional cinematic structures but paradoxically found itself at an impasse because of the lack of alternative or parallel structures of distribution.

Cinema Novo participants had naively overestimated their ability to penetrate foreign markets beyond the festival circuit, and given their frequently inexistent capital base, directors and producers came to depend on distributors and even exhibitors for postproduction financing. Dahl explains that "the exhibitor took advantage of this situation by diminishing the producer's percentage, releasing the film without publicity and using the film only to fulfill his compulsory exhibition quota. The cultural prestige and artistic success obtained by the films were insufficient to overcome either the pressure of the exhibitors or the traditional estrangement between the public and the *serious* Brazilian film" (197–98).[23] In other words, the ultimate cost of Cinema Novo's new attitude toward modes of cinematic production, film industry development and film aesthetics was its inability to penetrate the existing film market, where at least implicitly (and objectively) *less serious* Brazilian films did find success. Dahl's initial and most explicit explanation for this inability addresses what he calls the "greatest problem" of the national cinema: "the struggle of Brazilian exhibitors and foreign distributors against Brazilian producers and distributors" (200).

The problem with this argument is that it fails to link the exhibitor's resistance—they frequently argued that Cinema Novo films were too intellectual and hermetic for success in the marketplace—to the widely recognized fact that the public by and large did not accept the movement's films. If the public refused to see the films, the exhibitors argued, why should they be forced to exhibit them? The problem of

public acceptance would perhaps be of less significance if the movement had created stable parallel circuits for the exhibition of its films, but it did not, choosing, rather, to attempt to penetrate traditional circuits where deeply-rooted economic interests and cultural habits fostered traditional forms of cinema *qua* entertainment, precisely the type of cinema that Cinema Novo, at least initially, virulently opposed.

In "Cinema Novo e seu público," Dahl acknowledges that the movement's films did not reach their intended public (which he does not define but which apparently includes the film-going public as a whole) and asks whether that public would accept their films even if they saw them. The public Cinema Novo did manage to reach—estimated at around 50,000 people in Rio de Janerio—was composed largely of students, liberal professionals, intellectuals, artists, film enthusiasts and even "some sectors of the bourgeoisie." But, Dahl suggests, "even this public is not satisfied with the films produced by Cinema Novo. Although it follows the movement with interest, it has one criticism: it does not make films that please the public!" This supportive yet restricted public recognized Cinema Novo as an important cultural movement, but it regretted its hermeticism and its "divorce from the masses." Thus the major question facing the movement: "how to resolve the contradiction between a socially and aesthetically responsible cinema and its acceptance by the public" (194).

Dahl does not have an answer to this question. Rather, he shifts to the level of idealistic explanations ("film is an art . . . No one asks Boulez how many records he has sold . . .") by comparing Cinema Novo filmmakers (Rocha, Saraceni, Guerra, and Andrade, in this case) to Antonioni, Godard and Resnais, whose films are frequently unsuccessful at the box-office but who, unlike the Brazilians, are able to salvage the situation through international sales or, in the case of Godard, low budgets. Dahl thus displaces the argument from the concrete question of Cinema Novo's relationship with the public to the importance of linguistic experimentation in modern auteur cinema, using Godard as the paradigmatic example (195). Implicit in his formulation is a charismatic, Romantic vision of the artist and an essentialist view of the film as an *objet d'art*.[24] The importance of Cinema Novo, he suggests, consists in "its ambition to be part of a worldwide search for a new cinema" (198).

The basic problem remains unresolved. Cinema Novo, in its initial phase, was not accepted by the Brazilian people, and the movement did not seriously address "the fundamental question of the films' lack of communication with the public and its repercussions on the levels of language and ideology" (199). Who was to blame? Not the filmmakers; certainly exhibitors and foreign film distributors; perhaps

even the public. After all, in "Cinema Novo e estruturas econômicas tradicionais" Dahl had written that "the Brazilian public had followed the changes in taste of the worldwide public in its unbridled search for sex and violence, found in the plays of Nelson Rodrigues and cangaceiro adventures" (198).[25]

In "Cinema Novo e seu público" he continues the argument, recognizing the disjunction between the movement's political intentions and its objective inefficacy: "At first, the illusion was held that it would be sufficient to place the people in front of the films, as if before a mirror, for them to become aware of their alienation. Experience demonstrated exactly the opposite: the more they recognized themselves in their negative aspects, the more they protested. *It's dangerous to affirm that the public is not always right . . .*" (stress added). Some films of the movement's second phase—*Menino de engenho, São Paulo S.A., Matraga,* and *A grande cidade*—had more success, partially because they "overcame the exasperating slowness considered one of the characteristics of Brazilian cinema," but at the cost of a "dilution of ideological substance." Others, such as *O padre e a moça, A falecida,* and *O desafio,* with their "intransigent fidelity to the conceptions of an auteur cinema, their stylistic rigor, and their conspicuous personality . . . disconcerted the public" (200). The people, Dahl continues, "do not want to be made aware of their unhappiness and inferiority in relation to other nations. It is necessary . . . to reveal both their weaknesses and their strengths in order to prevent them from falling into either depression or euphoria. We must learn to entertain them with their problems, which is not easy, and make them believe that one day they will find a solution, which is even more difficult" (202).

One can clearly see in Dahl's statement of the problem the paternalistic didacticism of early Cinema Novo based, ultimately, on a Romantic vision of the artist (the auteur) as possessing a superior form of social and cultural knowledge as well as a self-attributed mission for making the people aware of their alienation and their supposed inferiority to other peoples as a means of helping them overcome their weaknesses and use their strengths to find solutions to their problems. If the people did not accept Cinema Novo's message, the difficulty must surely rest with them—or with the "colonial situation" which inculcated certain cinematic preferences—and not with the message itself or its aesthetic packaging.

In "A crise do cinema brasileiro e o plano Collor," critic Jean-Claude Bernardet discusses the insistence on a auteur mode of cinematic practice as a significant contributing factor to the crisis. Bernardet argues quite correctly that this insistence, combined with the inability or unwillingness to develop more stable modes of cinematic production—what he calls a "cinema de produtor" or a "producer's cinema"—led the independent cinema of the early 1960s to gradually become an "auteur-cinema-dependent-on-the-state." As Bernardet writes, "The model of auteur cinema comes from the days of silent film and reached its apogee with Cinema Novo and Marginal Cinema and its dependence on the state which was consolidated in the 1970s. This does not mean that beautiful films do not occasionally appear, but rather that the model does not offer a structural solution, that is, a form of production that attracts a public and is able to recuperate its means of production." In other words, the insufficiencies of the auteur model itself were a factor in the failure to develop a self-sustaining film industry with a strong financial basis in the support of the Brazilian public.[26]

Cinema Novo was left with two options: play by the exhibitor's rules and make popular films (in box-office terms) or change the public's viewing habits and preferences. Given the difficulty if not impossibility of the second—Dahl suggested, in "Cinema Novo e seu público," that such a change could occur only as a consequence of deep social transformations when the people would be "freed of the oppression of misery"—many of the movement's participants recognized that the production of more popular films became imperative if Cinema Novo was to continue to exist. To this end, it took a number of steps. First, producers and directors formed a distribution cooperative as a strategy for placing their films more easily in the market. Second, they began to make films they hoped would have a more popular appeal, turning more systematically toward literary classics and admitting comedy as an acceptable mode of discourse (early Cinema Novo, one might recall, was almost totally humorless).[27] In addition, they appealed to the state to guarantee, indeed impose, what the films themselves were unable to obtain: access to the market and a return on investments. One result of this appeal was the creation, within the INC, of subsidy and co-production programs, another was the increased screen quota for foreign films and the increased hostility between and polarization of producers and exhibitors.

The exhibitor was irreversibly cast in the role of villain with whom no dialogue was possible. In the I Congresso da Indústria Cinematográfica (First Film Industry Congress, 1972), the exhibitors' syndicate presented a twenty-one point proposal concerning the problems faced by the sector and focusing on financial assistance, standardized tickets and income reporting devices, and the compulsory exhibition law. Although many of the proposals were reasonable—such as a modification of the compulsory exhibition law so that no theater would be obligated to show a national film that had already been exhibited at

another theater within a one kilometer radius—none was accepted.[28] It was as if the exhibitors had no legitimate concerns to be addressed in a serious manner.

The future of Brazilian cinema is currently up in the air. Virtually all of the ideological alibis used in its defense over the last thirty years have crumbled along with the decimation of the domestic film market, the collapse of the production sector, and the at least temporary elimination of state support. The only solution to the current crisis—if there is one—may well be association with those long held to be the enemies of Brazilian cinema: foreign producers and exhibitors. Ironically, one of the few bright spots in the currently gloomy situation of Brazilian cinema is that Luiz Severiano Ribeiro Neto, owner of the largest exhibition network in Brazil, which was responsible for the immense success of the musical comedy (*chanchada*) in the 1940s and 1950s, is again entering production with low-budget, commercially-oriented films geared toward the true dimensions of the Brazilian market. The first such film—currently in production—is being directed by Sérgio Rezende. More importantly, however, if it is to survive the current crisis and remain a significant form of cultural expression Brazilian cinema must reexamine and redefine its relationship to the public and the state as well as its own position in the broader field of social relations.

Notes

1. After *O cangaceiro* Barreto was able to make only one other feature, *A primeira missa* (1961). Even award-winning Cinema Novo directors have been less-than-prolific, due primarily to structural and conjunctural problems. Joaquim Pedro de Andrade (*Macunaíma*, 1969) made only six features, including one documentary, between 1960 and his death in 1988, Leon Hirszman (1938–1988) only four.

2. The evolution of Cinema Novo's relationship to the state is outlined in Randal Johnson, *The Film Industry in Brazil*, especially chapters 4–6. The unprecedented level of stability and prosperity attained during this period is evident in the following statistics: between 1974 and 1978 the total number of spectators for Brazilian films doubled from 30 million to over 60 million, and total income increased by 288 percent, from $13 million in 1974 to over $38 million in 1978. Brazilian cinema's share of its own market increased from around 15 percent in 1974 to over 30 percent in 1978. From "Lei básica do cinema brasileiro," *Filme cultura*, 33 (May 1979): 114–16.

3. Given the complexity of the film production process, it is virtually impossible to know precisely how many films are currently underway. The figure given derives from conversations I had with a number of filmmakers in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in July 1990. Most of the films now in production are being financed by European television industries or by the municipal government of São Paulo. Many projects were paralyzed by Collor's extinction of Embrafilme.

4. The 20 of 30 figure sheds a favorable light on the real proportion. Of the top-grossing 100 Brazilian films of 1988, only around 20 were not pornographic. Of the 50 top-grossing foreign films during the same period, none were pornographic. See Concine, *Relatório de atividades* 76–77, 91.

5. The situation has improved slightly since 1984, especially as other networks have begun to mount more serious challenges to the Globo network's virtual monopoly, but not enough to significantly change the situation.

6. Journalist/critic Sérgio Augusto sarcastically refers to those filmmakers who were able to obtain financing primarily through political contacts rather than talent and who depended almost entirely on the state for their sustenance as "Embrafilme's orphans."

7. The evolution of the screen quota was the following: 1932: One short for each program of foreign films; 1939: One feature per year; 1946: Three features per year; 1951: One feature for every eight foreign films; 1959: 42 days per year; 1963: 56 days per year; 1969: 63 days per year (provisional); 1970: 77 days per year (provisional); 1970: 112 days per year (not implemented); 1970: 98 days per year (not implemented); 1971: 84 days per year; 1975: 112 days per year; 1978: 133 days per year; 1980: 140 days per year (Johnson 1987: 185).

8. Among films financed under the co-production program were Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's *Macunaíma* (1969), Carlos Diegues's *Os herdeiros* (1968), and Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Como era gostoso o meu francês* (1971). For a complete listing, see Johnson, *The Film Industry in Brazil* 202–4.

9. The texts of the decree-laws that founded and subsequently reorganized Embrafilme and founded Concine are in Mello, *Legislaçao*, 1: 11–29, 53–58.

10. Examples of such films are Glauber Rocha's *A idade da terra* (1980) and Leon Hirszman's *Eles nao usam black-tie* (1981).

11. Barreto and other producers formulated and presented to Passarinho a five-point program proposing, among other things, the restructuring of Embrafilme (Johnson, *The Film Industry in Brazil* 150).

12. According to the "Política nacional de cultura," the Brazilian government's cultural policy is founded on a number of basic principles that reflect the historical, social, and spiritual values of the Brazilian people. The document says explicitly that the state role includes support of spontaneous cultural production and in no way implies that the state has the right to direct such production or to in any way impede freedom of cultural or artistic creation. The state's responsibility, in other words, is ostensibly to support and stimulate cultural production, not control it. The document is infused with a nationalist sentiment that is broad enough to include virtually all Brazilian cultural production. It formulates a desire to construct a harmonious "national identity" on a symbolic level based on respect for regional and cultural diversity and the preservation of the nation's cultural and historical patrimony.

13. Velloso, who was an avid film fan and a friend of Cinema Novo veteran Nelson Pereira dos Santos, has explained the Geisel regime's support of the film industry in the following terms: "Our objective was not to make an experimental, formally sophisticated and hermetic type of cinema. Not that that was excluded, but it wasn't our primary objective. We had to make a kind of cinema that really reached the people, a culturally dignified cinema. . . . From the beginning there was an understanding that the government would not culturally restrain anyone. The filmmaker would have artistic freedom to make his film, but at the same time I warned them that although political cinema is certainly legitimate, they should not make a doctrinaire, propagandistic cinema" (in Tendler 164).

14. See Johnson, *The Film Industry in Brasil*, 19–23, 33–34.

15. The term "independent filmmaker" came into being with the Cinema Novo movement to distinguish between its mode of production and traditional modes of production based on a studio model. With the increasing dependence of such filmmakers on the state, the term has lost its original meaning and is in contradiction with their objective position in the cinematic field. Thus the quotation marks.

16. In an extensive interview granted after the release of his internationally-acclaimed *Pixote*, director Hector Babenco described his production company in the following manner: "My office is shameful. I have a typewriter I'm still making payments on and two telephone lines . . . I don't have anything, not even a lease . . . 'HB Filmes'! In fact, it's just me, an office and a secretary. When I'm sick, HB is sick; when I'm broke, HB is broke . . ." In Naves, et. al. *Cinema*, no. 5 (Fundaçao Cinemateca Brasileira, Spring 1980): 15. An abbreviated version of this interview, in English translation, can be found in *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 7 (1988), 241–54.

17. See, for example, comments by Luiz Carlos Barreto in *O Estado de São Paulo*, 12 September 1984.

18. Between 1974 and 1985 Embrafilme co-produced 194 feature films. For a complete listing, see Johnson, *The Film Industry in Brazil*, Appendix E, 213–20.

19. An important distinction is in order. Since Embrafilme's central offices were located in Rio de Janeiro, the agency was much more susceptible to pressure from Rio-based filmmakers than from those living in other parts of Brazil. São Paulo directors tended to use collective approaches to Embrafilme, devising more equitable forms of competition for funds within film industry organizations. Ozualdo Candeias describes their strategies in the following terms: "We in São Paulo never approach Embrafilme directly and say 'look, I have a film project for you to see.' We are united in an organization [the Associaçao Paulista de Cinema or APACI], and it is not our habit to act individually in relation to Embrafilme, perhaps partially because its relationship with São Paulo filmmakers has never been very good" (*Jornal da tela*, March 1990, 16). In the same issue, see additional comments by São Paulo filmmakers Joao Batista de Andrade and Sérgio Toledo.

20. See also, in the *Folha*: "L. C. Barreto diz que é credor da Embrafilme," 17 March 1986; Renata Rangel, "Co-produçao aumenta déficit da Embrafilme," 18 March 1986; "Nova declaraçao de Massaini," 18 March 1986; "Cineastas pediram o fim da correçao," 19 March 1986; Carlos Diegues, "De quem é mesmo o dinheiro da Embra," 20 March 1986; "Calil investe no cultural e comercial," 21 March 1986; Sérgio Santeiro, "O modelo cinematográfico opressor," 21 March 1986; "Furtado quer mudar Embrafilme," 22 March 1986; "Embrafilme responde à reportagem da *Folha*," 23 March 1986; Luiz Gonzaga Assis de Luca, "Embrafilme, o consumidor é quem paga," 23 March 1986; "Decreto de Sarney determina o que é o filme brasileiro," 25 March 1986; Sérgio Toledo and Roberto Gervitz, "Embrafilme é um antídoto," 30 March 1986.

21. Diegues's remark came in an interview to the *Jornal do Brasil*, 23 February 1985, and Calil's in an interview to that same paper on 23 March 1986.

22. In fact, the Fundaçao Brasileira de Cinema was never funded, and during its brief existence its budget came from Embrafilme.

23. Glauber Rocha describes this situation in some detail in *Revisao crítica do cinema brasileiro*, especially on 140–41. Rocha's own solution to the problem of market access involves two steps: first, a reserve market of 51% for national films, and second, increased censorship under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Culture. A censorship commission, made up of "intellectuals, critics, professors and men with a proven capacity for the cultural understanding of the cinema" rather than "ignorant police officials and puritan women," would screen both imported films and national films on the basis of "quality." His formulation constitutes an appeal for authoritarian solutions to the industry's problems (or at least for the problems of the "independent" directors and producers with whom Rocha was associated).

24. In the earlier article "Algo de novo entre nós" (1961), Dahl had written that "before being an industry, the cinema is an art," and "Art derives from the artist, the artist is the man [sic] who exists in freedom. The cinema, which is of man and Man [sic], is free, free above all from the economic pressure that industrial organization brings with it." The individual expression of an artist or auteur thus has priority over all other considerations.

25. It is perhaps ironic that one of the films Dahl mentions as being intransigently faithful to the original conceptions of Cinema Novo and the tenets of auteur cinema—and a box-office failure—is Leon Hirszman's *A falecida* (1965), based on a play by Nelson Rodrigues. The first film by a Cinema Novo director drawn from Rodrigues was Nelson Pereira dos Santos's moderately successful *Boca de ouro* (1962). In the 1970s and 1980s films based on Rodrigues would constitute a rich vein (culturally and economically) in Brazilian cinema, with such works as Arnaldo Jabor's *Toda nudez será castigada* (1972) and *O casamento* (1975), Neville d'Almeida's *Dama do lotaçao* (1978) and *Os sete gatinhos* (1980), Braz Chediak's *Bonitinha mais ordinária* (1981), and Bruno Barreto's *O beijo no asfalto* (1981), among others.

26. São Paulo crític Inácio Araújo once suggested to me that Brazilian cinema suffers from a "Godard syndrome" in that filmmakers tend to be more interested in aesthetic experimentation and, consequently, in being recognized as a "new Godard," than in making films that might please a broad public. Although one should be careful not to make excessively broad generalizations—there are *many* cases where this does not apply—Araújo is certainly correct in some instances.

27. Toward the end of the 1960s the situation was in fact beginning to change, with Andrade's *Macunaíma* being the paradigmatic case of a film that was both politically radical and successful at the box-office. In Nelson Pereira dos Santos's words, 'The big turnaround came with *Macunaíma*, [which constituted] a rupture with didactic cinema, an anthropological openness and the end of the limiting stances of pre-conceived intellectual schemes" (Bojunga).

28. For a more detailed description of the exhibitors' proposals, see Johnson, *The Film Industry in Brazil* 147–50.

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10. Michael Chanan, ed., *Twenty-five years of the new Latin American Cinema* (London: BFI, 1983), p. 2. See volume one for complete text of the essay by Birri.

11. In Michael Chanan, op. cit., p. 31.

12. Antonio Skármeta, "La reformulacion del status del escritor en el exilio," *Primer Cuaderno de Ensayo Chileno* (Ottawa: Ediciones Cordillera, 1980), p. 12 (my translation).

13. Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, (London: Verso, 1981), p. 32.

14. Eduardo Galeano, "L'exil: entre la nostalgie et la création," in *Amerique Latine: Luttes et mutations* (Paris: Ed. F. Maspero/Tricontinental, 1981), p. 117 (my translation).

15. Terry Eagleton, op. cit., p. 59.

Argentina

Popular Cinema and Populist Politics

Timothy Barnard

The influence of Argentine political life on the fortunes of the country's film industry, so forcefully felt during the period of the military dictatorship of 1976–83, has not always been the determining factor in the industry's discontinuous, at times paroxysmic, development. Thus the year 1931 marks, paradoxically, the birth of the national sound film industry, destined to become the continent's largest until its decline in the 1940s, one year after the country's first military coup. The political repression of the 1930s, *la decada infame*, did not impede the growth of the film industry, as the dictatorship of 1976–83 did so brutally. Nor did it prevent the birth of Latin America's first socially critical film genre, the "social-folkloric," that peaked in the late 1930s and early 1940s with films such as Mario Soffici's *Prisioneros de la tierra*(*Prisoners of the Earth*, 1939). Soffici and others built a tentative but extremely popular social criticism genre in the mainstream film industry, rooted in popular national culture, in spite of a censorship that Soffici has said kept him from examining religious issues and treating his political topics in as much depth as he would have liked. While the other genres that flourished in this era lack this element of social criticism they were, I will argue, fundamentally linked to Argentine popular culture and history in a way that had unmistakable political implications. In a country that has regularly seen pitched battles between the national bourgeoisie and the working classes for control of the culture industries, the film industry in this period was

Timothy Barnard, ed., *Argentine Cinema*. Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1986, pp. 7–11, 49–63. By permission of author/editor.

the almost exclusive domain of the latter, producing popular genres in a characteristically national style.

The period of the film industry's rapid artistic and economic decline in the mid 1940s is another example of the independent course the industry has taken from national political life. Colonel Juan Domingo Perón first appeared in Argentine politics as a participant in the military coup of 1943. He subsequently became Secretary of Labor and Social Welfare and introduced the first legislation governing the Argentine film industry. In 1946 he began a decade of rule as President of the Republic, introducing a period of fierce economic and cultural nationalism, a populist brand of politics, and remarkably progressive labor and social welfare policies. This, then, was a period that might have been expected to nurture the growth and populist traditions of the national film industry. It was precisely during Perón's rule, however, for reasons I will discuss below, that the film industry abruptly turned its back on the popular form and national themes of the 1930s in favor of European sources and a bourgeois form. The result of this strategy was to alienate the industry's largest markets, the Argentine and Latin American working classes, and bring ruin to the industry. It should be clear, then, that the peculiar dynamics of the national film industry must be explained with reference to autonomous social and cultural forces as much as to the country's often calamitous political events of the past half-century.

It was not until 1973 that the film industry really took its cue from national political events: it was in that year that Perón returned to power from eighteen years of exile and the film industry collaborated in the political and social project that began to unfold in his name. For the first time since the early 1940s, the industry regained a synthesis of social criticism and a popular and distinctly Argentine style. Not coincidentally, it was in 1973 that production levels and attendance figures reached a level that had not been attained since that earlier era. In 1973, even the mainstream elements of the film industry had become politicized by the years of popular resistance that precipitated the military's downfall and Perón's return. It was in this context that Héctor Olivera's *La Patagonia rebelde* (*Rebellion in Patagonia*, 1974) was made. It was a strictly commercial endeavor by a mainstream director, and proved to be the most popular Argentine film during Perón's last presidency. The film is a gaucho epic of sorts, a traditional Argentine genre, but one laced with radical political rhetoric. As a depiction of the massacre of anarcho-syndicalist workers in Patagonia in the 1920s by a cold-blooded military, it was widely seen as an allegory for the bitter civil war that preceded Perón's return in 1973.[1] Today, as the country lives through a roughly analogous process—the return to democracy and the rebirth of national culture—the production strategies of the mainstream of the film industry are vastly different, and it seems as if the goal of synthesizing a popular national style with social criticism has been abandoned. The reasons for this must be sought, first of all, in the events of 1976–83, but also in the long-standing national cultural conflict which is a product of the extreme polarization of Argentina's social classes.

The most recent and extreme period of political repression in Argentina—begun in 1974 by the Peronist Right after the death of Perón and intensified under the Junta of 1976–83—is coming to be characterized as a period of aberrational terror. Some political commentators of the non-Peronist Left, however, are insisting that the Junta's activities be seen instead as a culmination, even as a logical outgrowth, of Argentina's economic and political history.[2] This position shifts the focus of attention from newspaper-headline body-counts of atrocities to a consideration of what the Junta's long-term objectives were; whether, in fact, they were not at least partially achieved; and to what extent they continue to inform the political and social agendas of the highest levels of the national bourgeoisie.

Similar questions come to mind about the Junta's cultural policies (and it must be remembered that the Junta had a planned and ambitious cultural, economic, and political agenda. Theirs was neither a policy of containment nor of "blind terror" but a plan to restructure Argentine society on a scale without parallel in our hemisphere in this century). Beyond the assassinations, the exiles, and the blacklists, what were the effects of the Junta's policies on the Argentine film industry? What was the long-term cultural agenda of the Junta and how might it be seen as a culmination of long-standing conflicts in Argentine cultural history?

It is fairly simple to catalogue some of the structural effects of the Junta's rule on the film industry. Production fell to its lowest level in twenty years, since the period following Perón's overthrow in 1955. The industry was subsequently affected by massive unemployment and union activities were suspended. Foreign markets were lost—a disaster in an industry that has always relied on international sales for its survival. There were huge drops in domestic movie attendance and widespread movie theater closings, particularly in the interior of the country. The domestic market became dominated as never before by U.S. films—second-rate ones at that, as better productions were stopped at the border because of everything from nudity to references to homosexuality and other forms of "immorality." Production became concentrated in the hands of a few large firms—since 1977, there has been only one sound studio in the country. A distribution sector spe-

cializing in cheap U.S. imports was consolidated, as it became more advantageous to distribute foreign films and benefit from the lower capital investment they required and the greater rates of return they offered. Finally, a system of censorship was imposed that was not only so severe that meaningful social criticism became impossible, but so erratic and unpredictable that investment in national film production became a very risky proposition, as censored films would neither earn revenue in the domestic market nor be likely to be sold abroad. A censored film's producer would also be denied payment of promised state co-production assistance, which led to the ruin of at least one production company. Without going over each of these points in detail, it should be clear that such structural changes in the film industry must certainly be affecting current efforts to revive production, recover foreign markets, and re-establish a healthy domestic market.

Predictably, a decade of repression, an emasculated national production at drastically reduced levels, and a flood of generally poor foreign films led to a profound debasement of popular taste. Yet it is important to situate this process not just as a result of the policies and repression of the Junta but to relate it to a long-standing conflict in the national culture. Through its actions the Junta was simply enacting the agenda of one side in this conflict, albeit on an unprecedented scale. It should be noted that the Junta developed as apocalyptic a vision of national culture as it did of the country's political life. While the Junta believed that the entire Argentine political process had become tainted with the influences of "International Marxism," it remained for them a largely foreign threat, with Argentine agents.

Their analysis of popular culture was substantially different. Here, the danger lay within the unique political heritage of the country's popular culture, a heritage that had been revived and so forcefully expressed under Perón in the 1973–75 period. It thus became imperative to the Junta that they eliminate popular national culture in its entirety in order to "reconstruct" it. Culturally, perhaps even more so than politically, they had to shear off the cancer affecting Argentine society and start from zero, or lose the game. In this sense, the censorship, economic chaos, and genocide of the Junta's rule were just the growing pains of a project of "National Reconstruction" whose agenda was only beginning to be fulfilled.

The Years of Military Rule and of the Third Peronist Presidency: 1955–1983

Space restrictions limit me to extremely cursory comments on the period after Perón's overthrow by the military in 1955, an event followed by the re-writing of film policy in 1957. Readers are referred to the articles by Fernando Birri, Octavio Getino, and Alfonso Gumucio Dagron, as well as to my own chronology of Argentine cinema elsewhere in this volume for a more complete picture of this period.[3]

Two major trends appeared in—or, more precisely, in the margins of—the film industry in the late 1950s. While diametrically opposed thematically and stylistically, they shared, to varying degrees, persecution by the authorities and a rejection of the decayed mainstream of the industry. In 1953 Fernando Birri returned to Argentina from studies at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome and in 1956 founded La Escuela Documental de Santa Fé, a documentary film school. Two years later he produced the school's first film, *Tire dié* (*Throw Me a Dime*), cited by Julianne Burton as the first Latin American social documentary and revealing the visible influence of Birri's studies with the Italian neo-realists. Birri's cinema was both more critical and less "popular" than the cinema under discussion in this article; "less popular" in the sense that his films were generally not seen through normal commercial channels and were often censored. Birri's main influence, though immense, thus lies not in the production of critical films in the mainstream but in his work as a teacher, theorist, and documentarist of the country's social reality, particularly in the interior.

The other trend to appear in the late 1950s was a movement labelled the Argentine nuevo cine. Composed of a handful of young directors, this movement was influenced by the auteurist renewal underway in European cinema at the time. This intellectual and introverted style was transposed by the nuevo cine filmmakers onto an urban Argentina, resulting in a cinema with little in common with the genres of the 1930s. Although itself defined by a European style, nuevo cine was also a strong reaction against the work produced in the 1940s. "There are no white telephones in my films," declared Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, who is generally considered a key member of the movement, though his entry into the industry preceded the real birth of nuevo cine by a few years.

Not only did these filmmakers renounce the forms of the 1940s, they combined this new European style with a return to Argentine authors (albeit authors a world apart from a novelist such as Alfredo Varela, an Argentine communist whose *El río oscuro* was the source for the country's last great social-folkloric film, *Las aguas bajan turbias* (*Troubled Waters*, by Hugo del Carril, 1952). *Nuevo cine* directors adapted instead the urbane work of novelists such as Julio Cortázar, Beatriz Guido (Torre Nilsson's wife), and David Viñas.[4]

The birth of *Cine Liberación* in the late 1960s (a process Octavio Getino describes in detail elsewhere in his essay in volume one) was

both a response to the state of the film industry in those years and a product of the social upheaval then underway in the country. At that time, the Argentine film industry, heavily censored since the end of a brief return to democracy in 1963, was composed of a thoroughly lifeless mainstream and a vigorous auteurist rump that was only beginning to produce features regularly, having long been marginalized. Neither the mainstream nor nuevo cine addressed themselves with any zeal to the political and social turbulence of the era. Perhaps this is due, on nuevo cine's part, to the censorship of quite innocuous films by two of its leading members, Manuel Antín and Fernando Ayala. The country's social turbulence was the result of the forging of an informal common front between the working and middle classes in a struggle against military rule. This process became particularly visible after 1969, a date that marked, not co-incidentally, *Cine Liberación*'s issuance of their "Towards a Third Cinema" manifesto [see volume one for the complete text of the manifesto]. In response to the political compromises required by auteurist production, and in the context of a growing acceptance of radical anti-imperialist theories by middle class intellectuals, *Cine Liberación* called for the creation of a "guerrilla cinema" that would join in the resistance. This cinema was based on principles of collective (and generally clandestine) production; parallel distribution, which involved audience discussion of the film; and unflinching political opposition to the military government. The group's first film, *La hora de los hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*, by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 1966–68) was, as Getino reminds us, the first film to be used directly in the struggle for national liberation in a neo-colonized country.

For all *Cine Liberación*'s revolutionary political rhetoric, it collaborated in the democratic process that began in 1973 with the abdication of the military and the return of Perón as President after eighteen years of exile. To the dismay of some elements of the Left in Argentina and abroad who were intoxicated with the notions of "permanent revolution" and "guerrilla cinema," *Cine Liberación* put down its arms, as it were, to join in a democratic process that we are tempted, in retrospect, to view as inherently flawed and doomed from the start. The group collaborated on two fronts: first, by assisting in the elaboration of film policy, primarily through the presence of Getino as director of the film classification board; and second, by renouncing clandestine *agit* film production and joining, more or less, the mainstream of the industry with a view to producing commercial films for general release.

There can be no doubt that on both counts the experience was fruitful. The elaboration of film policy during this third Peronist presidency was influenced more by the Peronist Left than were other social and economic policies. The abolition of censorship, the stimulation of production, and renewed efforts to limit the influence of foreign films in the domestic market all contributed to a cultural renaissance that benefitted from the participation of *Cine Liberación*.

In the context of a collective nostalgia for an imagined Argentine golden age (the affluent years of Perón's first presidency in the 1940s), the film industry undertook a remarkable revival of traditional Argentina film genres and themes. A number of important films were made by the country's best directors, films such as Olivera's *La Patagonia rebelde* (1974), Torre Nilsson's 1940s-style period piece "women's film" *Boquitas pintadas* (*Heartbreak Tango*, 1974), Leonardo Favio's *Juan Moreira* (1973) and Lautaro Murúa's *lumpen* drama *La Raulito* (*Tomboy Paula*, 1975). *Cine Liberación* directors contributed somewhat more radical visions of popular culture. Getino made *El familiar* (*The Relative*, 1973), financed by Italian television, based on a Tucumán legend. Fernando Solanas made *Los hijos de Fierro* (*The Children of Fierro*, 1972–77), a personal statement on the political events of the years of dictatorship and the success of the resistance movement. Gerardo Vallejo made *El Camino hacia la muerte del Viejo Reales* (*Old Man Reales' Road to Death*, 1970), a documentary of the three years he spent living with a rural family.

The course of political events after Perón's return is widely known. The national unity his return had promised, the unification of Argentina's polarized social classes behind a populist leader, failed to take root. Following his death fourteen months after returning to power, the internal contradictions of Peronism exploded into increasingly violent confrontations between a radical Peronist Left, which had spearheaded the resistance movement, and right-wing cronies and union bosses from earlier days. An undeclared civil war began that was only intensified and given a name after the military took power in 1976. To the non-Peronist Left, the whole experience is offered today as proof not only of the internal contradictions that affected (and affect) Peronism, but of the inherent inadequacy of populism as a political strategy in the continuing struggle for national liberation and meaningful democracy. This view contains far-reaching implications for a film industry whose most critical and democratic elements, whether tied to Perón or not, have always followed an essentially populist course.

Film Under Democracy: 1983 to the Present

I have already discussed, at the beginning of this essay, some of the problems facing the Argentine film industry today after a decade of

repression and economic chaos. The present composition of the industry is also discussed in some detail in the report prepared by *SICA* [see the next chapter in this volume]. I will return here briefly to a discussion of some of these points in order to make a few tentative final comments on the future of Argentine cinema under democracy. Unfortunately, a proper consideration of the nature of that democracy lies well outside the scope of this essay [and volume]. It might be noted in passing, however, that President Raúl Alfonsín's Radical Party seems determined not to antagonize the military. Show trials of nine former Generals and Presidents have therefore taken the place of a thorough inquiry into the activities of the Armed Forces during the years of terror, and of the necessary structural reform of the military. Alfonsin has also distanced himself from the radical positions of, most notably, Peru and Cuba on the foreign debt question, and he has endeavored to pay the Junta's U.S. $55 billion debt on better terms than those sought by the IMF. This is having an enormous effect on living standards in Argentina and on the country's social services, as well as on indicators such as illiteracy, which has risen considerably in the last decade and continues to rise under democracy. All of these factors, as *SICA* points out in its report, are hindering the revival of the national film industry.

During the dictatorship, with the production and popularity of domestic films at an all-time low, Argentine distributors began to distribute large numbers of foreign films, particularly of course U.S. films (to an even larger extent than is "normal" in a neo-colonial cultural situation). Because of the Junta's censorship and the relatively low rates of return they offered, very few Latin American films were included among these. The distribution of Latin American films within the region has been problematic at the best of times, and in the past there have been proposals for the establishment of a Latin American common market for film.[5] This call has not been taken up in Argentina today, as sales priorities have been oriented away from the Latin American market, for reasons I will discuss. Nor have Argentine distributors rushed to put Latin American films on Argentine screens since the return of democracy: in the first half of 1985, only six Brazilian films, and no other Latin American films, opened commercially in the country. Because of the political censorship in Argentina for most of the past twenty years, Cuban cinema, for example, is virtually unknown there. It is only through the efforts of cine clubs and *SICA* seminars that it and other regional cinemas are seen at all. This activity, however, is obviously no replacement for mainstream distribution, the lack of which is perpetuating Argentina's cultural isolation from the rest of Latin America.[6]

After nearly a decade of dictatorship, Argentina's working class, traditionally the strongest market for national production, had become a relatively poor consumer of Argentine films. This remains true today, after nearly three years of democracy, and only partially because of Argentina's high per capita ownership of television sets or of the austerity measures of the present government, which include a wage freeze alongside 40% inflation, leaving little money in working class households for outings to the cinema. Film attendance in the working class districts of Buenos Aires and in the industrial cities of Córdoba and Rosario fell substantially in 1985 after rising in 1984, the first year of democracy. While overall admissions to Buenos Aires movie theaters fell 6.1% between 1984 and 1985 (a startling and troublesome figure in itself), di Núbila, writing in *Variety*,[7] cites unnamed industry sources as saying that this figure doesn't approach the "disastrous" drop in attendance in the working class districts. The problem today is not simply one of a lost moviegoing habit compounded by an economic crisis that encourages people to stay home and watch TV. It is instead a result of a production strategy that emphasizes production for the national middle class and European markets while neglecting the national working class and Latin American markets.

In the production sector, the response to Argentina's historic dependence on foreign markets in order to maintain high levels of production has been to orient production to the lucrative West European and North American markets. This strategy has been vindicated by the success in these markets of such films as *Camila* (María Luisa Bemberg, 1984), *La historia oficial* (*The Official Story*, by Luis Puenzo, 1985) and *Tangos, el exilio de Gardel* (Tangos: the Exile of Gardel, by Fernando Solanas, 1985). In turn however, it has required the industry to virtually write off the Latin American market because of its fundamental incompatibility with the European market (I will discuss how Solanas' film represents an exception). Because of the Latin American debt crisis, government controls on foreign profit remittances, and widespread video piracy, to name just three of the problems currently affecting Latin American film industries, the present-day Latin American market offers few opportunities for substantial sales revenue. While the Argentine strategy is thus a response to the undeniable reality of film distribution in Latin America, it exacerbates at the same time the historic problem of the orientation of Argentine culture to European tastes. For this reason, the strategy is not without its detractors in Argentina today, who fear that an overriding concern with the success of Argentine films in the European market will eventually lead to a distortion of the national style. Already, it has visibly alienated the domestic working class market, as the best directors are

now working on prestigious productions aimed at foreign markets (the most notable examples of this in 1986 are Raúl de la Torre's *Pobre mariposa* (*Poor Butterfly*) and María Luisa Bemberg's *Miss Mary*. The latter was unfinished when I was in Argentina in May 1986, while the former had just gone into local release after representing the country in competition in Cannes. Primed as the prestige production of the year, it has been both an artistic and commercial disappointment, and it does not promise to match the domestic success of Solanas' *Tangos*).

Two of the three principal members of *Cine Liberación*, Gerardo Vallejo and Fernando Solanas, have returned to Argentina since the 1983 elections and have resumed film work there (the third, Octavio Getino, remains in Mexico). Vallejo has contributed another film to his ongoing project of developing a regional cinema in Tucumán, one of the most depressed regions in the Argentine interior. *El rigor del destino* (*The Sternness of Fate*, 1985), one of a very few Argentine films shot in the interior, is an emotional and nostalgic return to a rural social-folkloric theme. The release of Solanas' film this year, in contrast, heightened the debate over European versus Argentine styles. Set in Paris, begun in France while Solanas was in exile, winner of a Special Jury Award at the 1985 Venice Film Festival, *Tangos* has been criticized by some as being too "European" and "entertaining" for a Latin American political film. At the same time, a film such as *La historia oficial*, though thoroughly revisionist in its depiction of bourgeois anguish under the Junta,[8] has been praised for its ostensibly correct political line and the emotional power of its drama. This dichotomy, perpetuated mostly by foreign critics, seeks not only to relegate Latin American film production to the exclusively "political,"[9] but also misunderstands the historical context of progressive filmmaking in Argentina and skews the priorities of the reconstruction of a critical national culture.

La historia oficial spearheaded, by virtue of its bland international style and thematic attention to the Argentine middle class, the Argentine film industry's reorientation towards the national middle class and the European and U.S. markets. (It is interesting to note that Puenzo came to film from a background in publicity, common enough in Argentine cinema but evident nonetheless in the film's style). *Tangos*, on the other hand, despite what some call a "European art-house" look, has to be considered one of the most distinctly Argentine films to be made since 1983. It will probably prove—it has only just been released at the time of this writing—second only to *La historia oficial* in domestic box-office receipts and international sales to date. It is also

proving of greater interest to the more "popular" sectors of the Argentine and Latin American public.

In many respects, *Tangos* represents Solanas' return to the aborted project of 1973–75, the attempt to make entertaining mainstream films that combine social criticism with popular national culture. The lyrics of the tangos in the film were written by Solanas, who has a musical background, and the score was composed by the Argentine tango great Astor Piazzolla. But the film is also, according to Solanas, more than a tango musical; it is a *tanguedia*—part tango, part tragedy, part comedy, requisite ingredients of the national culture. The film is thus a clear homage to José Agustín Ferreyra, to his style and thematic concerns, and also of course to his own musical experimentation—*La muchacha del Arrabal* (1922), for which Ferreyra wrote lyrics to the film's live tango accompaniment. *Tangos*, however, presents a necessarily more radical view of Argentine popular culture: in Paris, the film's protagonists play tangos that have been banned by the military Junta that has forced them into exile.

It is hard to understand how an Argentine tango film, with cameo appearances from such historical personages as General San Martín and Carlos Gardel, could be regarded as more "European" than "Argentine" in style. Indeed, it is precisely in the context of a military Junta that banned certain tangos in its campaign to eliminate national culture that the political significance and cultural nationalism of the film should be clearly evident. The questions that this film should instead be raising concern the wisdom of a return to the golden age of the culture of the past, to tangos and to Ferreyra, in order to reconstruct a radical film culture in Argentina today.

Sectors of the non-Peronist Left have not failed to recognize the implicit cultural Peronism of *Tangos*—to recognize, in a word, its populism. As much as they disapprove of the internationalization of style by external market forces, they also reject a return to the "national-mythological" project that ended with the death of Perón over a decade ago. This approach, it is felt, might equally degenerate into a populist Latin American exoticism for the national working class and foreign markets alike.

An alternative approach can be seen in the work of Teo Kofman in his film *Perros de la noche* (*Dogs in the Night*, 1986, not yet released in Argentina or abroad at this writing). A gritty *lumpen* drama set in the shantytowns around Buenos Aires—a taboo topic—it is based on the caustic novel of the same name by Enrique Medina whose work, among other things, seeks to destroy the image of Buenos Aires as a cosmopolitan cultural capital, thus "Latin Americanizing" it. It is hard to tell, however, if this film, because of its fatalistic image of a social

group too often ignored in Argentina, will find wide commercial success.

Nevertheless, it remains true that the Argentine cultural Left, like the political Left, must now "abandon the myths and phantasms of the past," as one political commentator has put it, and rebuild a critical cinema, one that is responsive to the realities of contemporary Argentina. As I have mentioned, the death of populist politics has wide implications for the film industry, whose more progressive sectors have always followed a populist course. This does not mean, however, that the unique achievements and agenda of the 1973–75 period, the goal of widespread distribution and fidelity to popular national culture, should be abandoned.

Notes

1. See Tim Barnard, ed., *Argentine Cinema* (Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1986), the entry regarding this film in the chronology of Argentine cinema, page 158, for an account of its impact on Argentine society.

2. See especially Alejandro Dabat and Luis Lorenzano, *Argentina: The Malvinas and the End of Military Rule (London: Verso, 1984).*

3. See Tim Barnard, *Argentine Cinema*, or volume one for essays by Birri and Getino.

4. The later work of nuevo cine director Manuel Antín represents an exception to this trend. After early collaborations with Cortázar, (*La cifra impar —The Odd Number*, 1961), he turned to *gaucho* themes in the films *Don Segundo Sombra* (1969, from the national literary classic by Ricardo Güiraldes) and *Juan Manuel de Rosas* (1970). Leopoldo Torre Nilsson as well filmed gaucho themes during this period, including an adaptation of José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* (1968).

5. Proposed by, among others, the former head of *Embrafilme* in Brazil, Roberto Farias, and by Octavio Getino.

6. Further evidence of the inadequacy of the Argentine film distribution sector is provided by the recent case of Jean-Luc Godard's film *Je vous salue, Marie* (*Hail Mary*, 1985). This film, as is well known, has aroused considerable controversy around the world, been denounced by the Pope, and is banned in many countries, including the newly democratic Brazil. Brazil's President succumbed to intense Catholic pressure and banned the film over the protests of his censor board. Its future was also hotly debated in Argentina, where the Catholic hierarchy may be even more conservative and powerful (many of the country's most powerful Church figures, for example, supported the Junta to the very end). Despite one prominent Catholic's claim that President Alfonsín personally assured him the film would not be allowed into the country, no such prohibition order followed. However, six months after the controversy, no Argentine distributor has bought the rights to it and it has not been seen in Argentina.

7. Variety, 12 March 1986.

8. The national bourgeoisie embraced the Junta with open arms in 1976 and for years refused to acknowledge its atrocities, benefitting at the same time from the Junta's *plata dulce* ("easy money") economic policies—noted only peripherally in *La historia oficial.*

9. Solanas, for example, has lamented in recent interviews that no one interviews him about film art, only about politics.

Contemporary Argentine Cinema

David William Foster

In 1983 Argentina returned to constitutional democracy after a decade of military dictatorship. The process of redemocraticization, officially sponsored by the new government and pursued vigorously throughout public and private sectors of the cultural establishment, brought with it an enormous renewed cultural production.[1] Traditional cultural forms like literary and general interest magazines, novels, and dramatic works constituted a particularly extensive part of this production.[2] Television programming was expanded to include not only enhanced national productions but also productions that echoed the goals of redemocratization. It augmented coverage of contemporary sociopolitical issues and contributed to the analysis of the devastating consequences for national life of the military government, including the "dirty war" against alleged subversives and the lamentable Malvinas (Falkland Islands) operation.[3]

One of the areas of cultural production that received special attention was filmmaking.[4] As B. Ruby Rich has observed: "the 1980s were a time for optimism regarding the revision and reinvention of the New Latin American cinema in a contemporary guise. The breaking of taboo and prohibition, the freeing of the imagination to fantasy, a respect for the mundane and everyday, the introduction of humor and music, the construction of new narrative strategies, and the reconsideration of the relationship to the audience, have all contributed to what I've defined as the monumental task of forging a new "collective subjectivity.""[5] Argentina had a long tradition of commercial and art films dating from the earliest days of the industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[6] Numerous Argentine directors attained international recognition, and many Argentine film people have pursued their careers in the United States (Lalo Schifrin in soundtrack music and the actress Norma Aleandro are only two recent examples). Through the Instituto Argentino de Cinematografía, the elected government that assumed power in late 1983 undertook to promote its policies of redemocratization through the stimulation of film production. During the following five years, several dozen major Argentine films, in one way or another, explored sociopolitical themes brought to the fore by redemocratization and the analysis of recent Argentine history. By 1988 economic problems began seriously to curtail film production underwritten by the Instituto—problems that were exacerbated by the fact that few of the films it underwrote were big money-makers, having to contend during the postcensorship era with the flood of foreign imports, always more appealing to an Argentine audience than Argentine or other Latin American films.[7]

Some of the Argentine films, however, notably Luis Puenzo's *La historia oficial* (*The Official Story*), which won the 1986 Oscar for the best foreign film, attracted international attention and had wide distribution in the United States and Europe, being readily available in video stores. Puenzo's film is, in large measure, emblematic of the renewed cultural production. Films like *Camila* (filmed by Argentina's most prominent woman director, María Luisa Bemberg), Eliseo Subiela's *Hombre mirando al sudeste* (*Man Facing Southeast*), and Fernando Solanas's *Tango, el exilio de Gardel* (*Tango, the Exile of Gardel*) are all outstanding examples of films produced with a high degree of technical skill and commercial gloss while at the same time addressing in a conscientious fashion the sociopolitical issues. These films are accompanied by others that may not have received the same degree of public acclaim but that, nevertheless, also demonstrate the new vitality in Argentine filmmaking during the second half of the 1980s: Pablo César's *La sagrada familia* (*The Holy Family*), Raúl A. Tosso's *Gerónima*, Teo Kofman's *Perros de la noche* (*The Dogs of Night*), Américo Ortiz de Zárate's *Otra historia de amor* (*Another Love Story*), and María Luisa Bemberg's *Miss Mary*, to name only the most prominent.

Since this study pretends to go beyond the circumscribed, intrinsic analysis of film style and structure in order to examine a block of cinema productions as ideological texts, it is necessary to engage in a series of considerations concerning the relationships between film and society. Teshome Gabriel offers the following principles for the study

David William Foster, *Contemporary Argentine Cinema* (Columbia, Missouri: 1992), pp. 1–3, 5–13, 150–54. By permission of the publisher.

of what has come to be called the Third Cinema, or filmmaking in the Third World that rejects the traditional Hollywood view of films as mass-distributed and commercially profitable entertainment:

> The infant study of Third Cinema has already set as its point of departure the examination of the unique context—cultural and ideological—in which these films have been produced. The critical inquiry that has evolved must address jointly the areas of text and context and it is to that end that the following should be taken into account.
>
> Third Cinema must, above all, be recognized as a cinema of subversion. It is a cinema that emerges from the peoples who have suffered under the spells of mystified cinema and who seek the demystification of representational practices as part of the process of liberation. Third Cinema aims at a destruction and construction at the same time: a destruction of the images of colonial or neo-colonial cinema, and a construction of another cinema that captures the revolutionary impulse of the peoples of the Third World. It is a progressive cinema founded on folk culture whose role it is to intervene on behalf of the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America who must fight equally for political as well as cultural liberation.
>
> A critical examination of Third Cinema cannot take place outside of a comprehensive knowledge of the lives and struggles of Third World people, in both their past and their present histories. Lacking this historical perspective, the film critic or theorist can only reflect on the ways in which this cinema undermines and innovates traditional practices of representation, but he/she will lose sight of the context in which the cinema operates. An equally significant component of the critical perspective that must be adopted is the recognition of the TEXT that pre-exists each new text and that binds the filmmaker to a set of values, mores, traditions and behaviors—in a word, "culture"—which is at all moments the obligatory point of departure. Without the necessary understanding of this pre-existent TEXT, critical inquiry would fall into the trap of auteurist fallacies and "aesthetic" evaluative stances.[8]

There are several problems in extending Gabriel's position to the Argentine filmmaking of the period of redemocratization. Aside from the dangers inherent in sustaining a global notion like the Third World, no matter what validity it has Argentina is hardly a Third World country in the way that, say, Bolivia is. And although it may be argued that Argentina, beyond the Avenida General Paz that separates the federal capital from the rest of the country, does present persuasive continuities with the Third World, Buenos Aires, at least in its culture-generating and culture-consuming nucleus, is not only non-Third World but aggressively anti-Third World. This circumstance cannot fail to have implications for the sort of films to be produced in Argentina by even the most socially committed of directors. Gabriel speaks of the use of folklore motifs as a confirming characteristic of Third Cinema, which implies a disjunction with the Eurocentrist trappings notable in commercial productions. Such trappings provide images of actual spheres of Latin American modernity or facets of a wish fantasy that is assumed to be alluring to mass audiences. While some Argentine filmmaking has made use of that country's rich folkloric traditions and has sought to portray human lives lived in accordance with world-views other than those promoted by the Porteño cultural establishment, directors have not generally viewed the folkloric as the site of alternate social realities.[9] Both the urban lumpen and the rural margins tend to be viewed as clinging to little more than vestiges of the capitalist promise.

Fernando Birri, a legendary Argentine director who has lived in recent decades in Cuba, expresses a position that may have greater resonance for Argentine efforts.

> WHAT KIND OF CINEMA DOES ARGENTINA NEED? WHAT KIND OF CINEMA DO THE UNDERDEVELOPED PEOPLE OF LATIN AMERICA NEED?
>
> A cinema which develops them.
>
> A cinema which brings them consciousness, which awakens consciousness; which clarifies matters; which strengthens the revolutionary consciousness of those among them who already possess this; which fires them; which disturbs, worries, shocks and weakens those who have a "bad conscience," a reactionary consciousness; which defines profiles of national, Latin American identity; which is authentic; which is anti-oligarchic and anti-bourgeois at the national level, and anti-colonial and anti-imperialist at the international level; which is pro-people, and anti-anti-people; which helps the passage from underdevelopment to development, from sub-stomach to stomach, from subculture to culture, from sub-happiness to happiness, from sublife to life.
>
> Our purpose is to create a new person, a new society, a new history and therefore a new art and a new cinema. Urgently.[10]

While there is still much of the Cuban-centered Third World rhetoric about Birri's statements, a rhetoric not easily subscribed to by sophisticated Buenos Aires cultural spokespersons, it is nevertheless quite evident that there are clear correspondences between the position

from which Birri is writing—the need for a thoroughgoing social revolution—and the process of redemocratization in Argentina. The latter was not committed, at either an official or popular level, to revolution in the socialist sense underlying Birri's words. But the need to repudiate fascism and military rule, the need to reconstruct Argentine society and its culture along meaningfully democratic lines, and the imperative to offer cultural texts that would, in noncommercial and nonexploitative ways, contribute to the new social and historical consciousness of "never again" were determining factors in the cinematographic production being spoke of here. (*Nunca mas* [*Never again*] was the title of the official government report on the disappeared.)

Moviemaking in Argentina in the postmilitary period undoubtedly demonstrated a more pronounced break with the past than did other forms of cultural production. Literature offered a sustained model of cultural resistance during the tyranny, as did some manifestations of popular music, popular art (like the magazine *Humor Registrado* [*Registered Humor*]), and other print media.[11] The theater also included significant works of a subversive nature; the Teatro Abierto (Open theater) movement begun in 1981 represented such a loudly defiant voice of cultural resistance that it became a symbol of the defiance of censorship and repression at a time when military authority had already begun to weaken.[12] But movies, along with television, because of the large capital investment required for production and distribution and their enormous public visibility, were severely circumscribed during the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (Process of National Reorganization), the name given by the military to the political programs it put into effect after the 1976 coup.

Although some innovative work with sociopolitical implications was done outside Argentina by Argentine directors (for example, Héctor Babenco in Brazil), film production in Argentina was almost exclusively in the Hollywood mold—or, at least, films were produced that could in no way pose a threat to the regime. Television programming relied heavily on dubbed foreign, mostly American, syndications, with only some innocuous national productions.[13] Seditious films were accessible through several underground means: importation and viewing of cassettes of banned movies by small circles; private screenings, ostensibly for publicity purposes, of films, including some countercultural Latin American items that could not be publicly released without cuts by the censors; and word-of-mouth or ciphered interpretations of commercially available foreign films, with or without cuts. The latter could contribute allegorical readings of Argentina's current political situation, either because they confirmed the structures

of fascism or because they could be argued to insinuate an opposition to it, if only a timid and perhaps contradictory one.

Thus the filmmaking that gathered momentum in Argentina after the return to democracy constituted a newly defined cultural component, whereas other cultural products only increased the quantity of their texts and the openness of sociopolitical themes. In this sense, film production was more closely coterminous with the process of redemocratization than were other cultural manifestations, lending it a greater symbolic aura and, because of its potential for mass consumption in ways that literature and the theater lack, allowing it a heightened internal and foreign distribution. Outside Argentina, the films produced after 1983 and throughout the rest of the decade have been widely accepted as indexes of that country's transcendence of military rule.

For President Raúl Alfonsín's government and the various permanent and ad hoc agencies involved in cultural production, culture was to play a key role in the process of redemocratization. This was natural, since the military, hardly underestimating, if not really understanding, the role of culture in society, had done much to destroy coherent cultural practices. Indeed, culture in Argentina had been besieged, with only brief respites in the late 1950s and early 1960s and in 1973, by all manner of military interventions since 1930, when a fascist coup installed José Félix Uriburu. As a consequence, redemocratization meant not just opposition to the dictatorship between 1976 and 1983 but, more significantly, the forging of a new institutionalism within the context of several generations of repeated aggressions—culture not only restored but an integral component of national consciousness.

Film deserved to be supported; Argentina could rightfully be proud of its historical leadership in Latin America in all aspects of filmmaking. The infrastructure of an industry was already in place and overlapped with the Buenos Aires theater world, still the driving force in Latin America, and with television, one of the largest enterprises on the continent and the first with color installations (thanks to the dictatorship's use of the 1978 World Soccer Cup in Argentina as a propaganda tool). Moreover, with regard to mass-distribution possibilities, not only did Buenos Aires enjoy a vast infrastructure for the showing of films, but films often appealed to an international audience in ways that few other cultural products could. Finally, and perhaps most important, film offered an all-enveloping illusion of reality far greater than television, the theater, or literature. Certainly, this illusion is fraught with ideological traps and allows precisely for the sort of manipulation of the spectator that is considered to be the worst aspect of

commercial filmmaking. Yet this illusionism allowed for a greater immediacy for images of sociopolitical reality and for a complex set of signs that could eloquently bring into play critical attitudes and revisionist/revolutionary modelings that were essential to reconfiguring the national consciousness as part of the process of democratization.

It will remain an open question whether this filmmaking—or, better, specific texts—should be viewed as modernist or postmodernist, as experimental or conservative.[14] The fact that these films essentially aspired to an appraisal of a well-defined sociopolitical reality—Argentina during the military tyranny and Argentina during the period of redemocratization—means that the self-reflexive and distancing procedures associated with experimental productions are inappropriate here. Moreover, modernist versus postmodernist postures are fundamentally bypassed, even when it is possible to talk about sophisticated spectator preferences that may condition response to certain texts. For example, postmodernist enthusiasms in Buenos Aires may have had much to do with a goodly amount of disdain for most of the films discussed in this study; individuals culturally raised at the movies viewed them as too transparent and ideologically naive, as technically clumsy, and as insufficiently engaged with the issues of a *cinéma internationale* to merit more than passing attention.

But, then, it is extremely dangerous to speak in generalities about an Argentine or a Porteño movie audience. There exist no published sociological or market studies about who goes to the movies in Argentina, and hence it is difficult to speak in any thing other than impressionistic terms about audience values, expectations, interpretive horizons, and the like. The reading of literature is a solitary act, and so we understand that literary criticism, no matter what level of complexity it assumes, is inescapably one person's reaction to a text. But the movies continue to be public spectacles, and even the home viewing of video cassettes tends to be done in a group. Yet film criticism, like any criticism other than a sociological survey of responses, is also a solitary analysis, a personal opinion.

But what seems to be more of a problem in the analysis of film vis-à-vis the spectator in Argentina is less a question of audience reaction in either personal or collective terms than of public preferences for foreign films. This preference was enhanced in the post-1983 period by the decensorship of imports; films were no longer banned or subjected to often confusing cuts, and there even arose a small but nevertheless significant exhibition of pornographic movies. The fact that audiences had access to so many movies that had never been shown in Argentina and to complete versions of movies that had been shown with cuts only served to increase the competition between Argentine

movies and foreign imports. As usual, American titles were abundant, but more significant was the considerable representation of key European films that had never passed the censors. The competition was further accentuated by the emergence of the home video industry. Video agencies and clubs seemed to have sprung up on every street corner, and their holdings were almost exclusively Hollywood productions, dubbed or subtitled. (One still visits them in vain looking for Argentine or Latin American films, which may be rented or bought only after extreme perseverance. This assertion is based on personal experiences in gathering copies of the films included in this study.) The result was that as production costs and ticket prices soared with inflation and the decline of the dollar in the late 1980s, the reemergent Argentine film industry also experienced heavy and, in the end, fatal competition from an industry whose profits were based virtually exclusively on the attraction of foreign imports.

While Argentine directors between 1983 and the end of the decade did not invest heavily in experimental cinematography, it is unquestionable that they did strive to stand in opposition to the commercial Hollywood norm and to make use of some of the principles of modernist and postmodernist filmmaking, or what D. N. Rodowick calls "counter-cinema."

> [T]he reflexive structure of the text of political modernism is mapped onto a series of formal negations organized according to the opposition of modernism to realism. In this respect, the text of countercinema is marked by its interiorization and critical interrogation of the codes of Hollywood narrative cinema—for example, narrative transitivity (linear and teleological exposition); emotional identification with the characters and diegesis; representational transparency (masking of the means of production); a singular, unified, and homogenous diegetic space; textual closure presupposing a self-contained fiction—all of which are designed to yield a narrative pleasure aimed at pacifying the spectator.
>
> In point of fact, . . . counter-cinema, which must accomplish the semiotic "deconstruction" of these elements of code, may be described in three points.
>
> 1. The text of political modernism cannot be conceived instrumental. . . .
>
> 2. Once the text has been opened up centrifugally—that is, once it has become intertextual—a difficulty in reading is imposed. . . .

3. This practice of reading imposed by the form of the modernist text generates a subjective response [called] "meaning effects."[15]

Surely, there is much about the Argentine production under consideration that exploits the narrativity of the Hollywood film, especially when critical or uncritical intertextualities appear together with the conventions of soap opera, as in Puenzo's *The Official Story* or Ortiz de Zárate's *Another Love Story*. Perhaps only Solanas's *Tango, the Exile of Gardel* and *Sur* (*South Side*) are unstintingly modernist, along with certain aspects of Subiela's science-fiction *Man Facing Southeast*. Yet all are marked by the sign of political modernism in the imperative to stimulate critical attitudes on the part of the spectator and to counteract the tradition of pacification Rodowick identifies as an essential component of the Hollywood mode—pacification in the sense of accepting reality as it is judged to be and refusing to entertain any ideological-dialectical critique of history. Perhaps few of the formulations are specifically Marxian, but the questioning of history, understood either in its conventional accumulated-past sense or as the Marxist here-and-now, is a unifying thread of the Argentine process of redemocratization, and it is in this sense that these films stand in opposition to the bulk of the commerical imports.

A number of recurring features of the films examined herein are characteristic of the resistance to narrative readability and the promotion of a critical and self-reflective countercinema of the type that Rodowick describes. One such feature is an appeal to allegorical configurations. While *allegory*, like so many of the conceptual terms used in literary criticism and extended to film analysis, is often overly flexible in its applications, the use of it here means to refer to the way in which characters, places, situations, and events have a historical meaning beyond their immediate, personal signification. A transparent semiosis implies that nothing has any meaning beyond itself and that, as a consequence, no story has any transcendent meaning beyond the trivially circumstantial, the essence of escapist meaning. Allegory, however, directs the spectator to understand how the personal is political and how the particular is historical, because every element in the social fabric is an interwoven part of the whole. In *The Official Story*, Gaby *is* Gaby as part of an intensely personal world, but she is also a sign for the destruction of innocence by military tyranny through the violent manipulation of individual destinies. Gaby's particular story is also the story of expanding spheres of Argentine social life, and spectator anxiety over her uncertain future at the end of the film points also toward the unresolved dilemmas of national existence. The repression of Rantes in Subiela's *Man Facing Southeast* and the persecutions of the gay lovers in *Another Love Story* are intrinsic to a set of personal lives, but both repression and persecution are constituents of a social dynamic the respective films are concerned to elucidate.

Documentalism is another sustained characteristic of the films of the Argentine period of redemocratization. Documentary, in either a literal sense or in the sense of the documentary-like re-creation of events from an earlier era, is an important form of contemporary filmmaking, and there are a number of Argentine monuments in this genre, such as Fernando Solanas's *La hora de los hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*), Octavio Getino and Solanas's *La Patagonia rebelde* (*Rebellious Patagonia*), Héctor Olivera's *Los hijos de Fierro* (*The Sons of Fierro*), and Eduardo Mignogna's *Evita, quien quiera oír, que oiga* (*Evita, Let He Who Wants to, Listen*). Documentary films, however, engage in a number of strategies to ensure audience recognition of the fact that fictional elements, if present at all, are only adjuncts to a core of archival material presented via a filmic exposition. Documentalism, by contrast, incorporates into a fictional narrative archival material as part of the expository texture of the narrative: the actual footage in *The Official Story* of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of Mayo Plaza) marching, veristic images of urban slums in Kofman's *The Dogs of Night*, television journalism footage in Bebe Kamín's *Los chicos de la guerra* (*The Boys of the War*).

Documentalism serves to anchor a narrative in a specific socio-political reality in order to trigger allegorical associations in the spectators' interpretation of a film. Cultural texts create an illusion of reality, beginning with the use of sign entities identified as human characters, while often at the same time reflecting facile decodifications of fictional reality as being merely transparent images of real life. Real life, of course, is not what takes place in cultural texts, at least not as such, although films (like television dramas) are particularly susceptible to being taken as open windows on actual life. Cultural texts, rather, are semiotic reconfigurations of real life, and the sense of meaning they propagate allows signs to posit a denser, overdetermined signification that the haphazard, random, and essentially infinite components of lived experience cannot have. Cultural texts expropriate signs from the latter and conscientiously structure them so that they will enter into processes of meaning spectators can contemplate or extrapolate in a manner specifically focused by the cultural event, or the entire ceremony associated with seeing a movie and deriving something from it. Cultural texts mediate and thereby defer real life, and yet documentalism and the overall appeal to verisimilitude in many cultural texts function to anchor the texts in recognizable social

and historical realities. Argentine post-1983 films are historical in any sense of the adjective, and documentalism is one way of enhancing continuities with acknowledged historical material.

History in the conventional sense of an accumulated past is also a component of these films, the most notable example being Bemberg's *Camila*, which is based on an actual event from the mid-nineteenth century. The implication is that the structure of repression and tyranny of that period prefigures recent Argentine history, and the film is both historically accurate in its details and anachronistic in the foreshadowing of contemporary reenactments of bloody narrative programs.

Postmodernist deconstructive recodifications of science fiction in *Man Facing Southeast*, of Nazi propaganda films in Héctor Babenco's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, of the soap opera in *Another Love Story*, and of pornographic erotica in *The Dogs of Night* represent yet another dimension of turning transparent narrativity into analytical countercinema without aspiring to an uncompromisingly experimental cinematography. Any attempts to embrace the latter would have, more than likely, reduced these films' audience, whose numbers were already threatened, to the vanishing point by the attraction of decensored foreign commercial imports.

One of the sustained concerns of the analyses of the above films is to assess the ideological consequences, first, of the appeal to parameters of meaning established by the overall climate of redemocratization and, second, the utilization of semiotic strategies to ensure the films' function as texts that are not Hollywood competitors but entries in a new socially analytical Argentine filmography.

II

Perhaps it would be exaggerated speculation to assert that film is the most representative manifestation of the culture of Argentine redemocratization. Film is a highly visible commercial product and one that can now be safely, although not exclusively, inscribed within the orbit of high or elite culture. As such, it ought not distract attention from the truly heterogeneous display of popular culture processes that have emerged since censorship was lifted and the market demand took hold for a multiplicity of products that could in no way have been possible under the dictatorship: rock music and songs appealing to diverse sectors of Argentina's extensive youth culture; television programming with both a national and international focus; magazines of all types, especially humor and satirical publications; mass spectacles, including concerts and broad-audience reviews; paraphernalia, such as bumper stickers, buttons, t-shirts, and posters, that proclaim previously proscribed feelings or identities, even those relating to sex. In the face of this wealth of cultural production, one would be well advised not to inflate the importance of genres that, while they may be of interest because of the concentrated originality of creative effort underlying them, may perhaps have not had the general societal impact enjoyed by mass consumer products.

Despite an unfavorable economic situation that has even worsened under democracy since the artificial supports of the tyranny were removed, redemocratization unleashed in the early 1980s, in an Argentina always ready to consume enthusiastically the latest cultural fashions, an intense desire to assimilate products that the dictatorship had suppressed. As I have argued from the outset of this essay, the appeal of the filmmaking during the period of redemocratization turned out to be severely circumscribed by the greater priority of audiences to see the many foreign films that had either been banned by the junta's censors or shown in cut versions.

Yet when one examines the privileged position of filmmaking vis-à-vis other high culture genres during the period in question, there is an undeniable basis for viewing it as exceptionally significant. Theater made its greatest contribution in the form of Teatro Abierto, which between 1981 and 1983 defied in dramatic terms (double entendre intended) the structures of repression. Although some denunciatory works of fiction, such as those by Marta Lynch, Jorge Asís, and Enrique Medina, did circulate during the tyranny, it was probably the most visible form of Argentine culture in exile, in both Spanish and in translation, as witnessed by the works of David Viñas, Manuel Puig, Griselda Gambaro. Poetry always has a select appeal, although the poet Alejandra Pizarnik, who committed suicide in 1972, emerged as something of a cult figure. Her *La condesa sangrienta* (*The Bloody Countess*), on the sadistic exploits of the seventeenth-century lesbian Hungarian countess Erzébet Báthory, was reissued in 1976 and understandably read as a metaphor of human rights abuses.[16] And the sociopolitical essay, which enjoyed some prominence during the transition between the periods of the military and of constitutional democracy, can be viewed as a more focused derivative of the many voices of oppositional journalism that found channels of expression during the military period, especially since most of the authors of book-length exposés after 1983 were professional journalists.[17]

Filmmaking since 1983 is essentially coterminous with the process of redemocratization. Thus, all of the films examined herein bear directly on questions of sociopolitical dissent, whether understood in terms of explicit public acts or interpreted under the aegis of the slogan "the private is political," which suggests the way in which ideo-

logical interpretations are drawn from a consideration of the erotic and the sexual. Even those films that, on the one hand, deal with intensely intimate questions (like *Another Love Story*) or, on the other, deal with superficially local-color issues (like *South Side*) can only with great effort not be read as dealing with larger, unresolved tensions in Argentine society, despite the much vaunted return to institutional democracy. Certainly, the return to democracy provided the opportunity to deal with these questions. And cultural products like the film were inevitably going to invite the spectator to view them as examining critically precisely those topics that the constitutional government had been unable to address satisfactorily. And, to the extent that Argentina viewed itself as modeling for other Latin American countries emerging from a decade or more of military tyranny the possibilities of a thoroughly redemocratized society, a highly international cultural phenomenon like the film lent itself eloquently to a process of interpretation leading from the immediately personal or the immediately local to larger and abiding questions of Latin American society. Those questions concerned individuals' legitimate control of their own bodies, the opportunities to question established authority and to unmask its disingenuous strategies for self-perpetuation, and the structures whereby sociopolitical repression remains unchanged despite manifest revisionary attitudes. In this sense, the despair of the psychiatrist at the end of *Man Facing Southeast* enunciates all of the concern these films sought to activate over the true process of social—and, therefore, personal—reorganization that remains yet to be enacted.

Films that were produced in Argentina before 1983 and under the shadow of the junta were in the main commercial ventures with inconsequential or nonexistent artistic dimensions. Or, at any rate, the films that were made with artistic pretensions could hardly have anything to do with the facts of military rule, for example, Mario Sabato's 1979 *El poder de las tinieblas* (*The Power of Darkness*), based on the novel *Sobre héroes y tumbas* (*On Heroes and Tombs*) by his father, Ernesto Sabato. As Peter B. Schumann has written:

> The consequences [of the military dictatorship] were disastrous for Argentine cinematography. A great many filmmakers saw themselves forced to go abroad to escape the death threats: Gerardo Vallejo and Lautaro Murúa, who only by chance survived the bombs that exploded in their homes; Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas, Humberto Ríos and Rodolfo Kuhn, Mauricio Beru and Jorge Cedrón, and including, although only for a short time, Leopoldo Torre Nilson, along with many others, the majority of the most well known figures. Some were kidnapped and probably killed, as occurred with Raymundo Gleyzer and Pablo Szir; likewise with the authors and scriptwriters Haroldo Conti and Rodolfo Walsh. Others, like Enrique Juárez, were executed.
>
> The exodus, the repression, the prohibitions on exercising the profession, and the censorship undermined the substance of Argentine cinematography. The amount of films released dropped from 35 in 1975 to 16 in 1976, to again rise to 32 in 1979 and, finally, reached its lowest point in 1982 with only 17 full feature films; all this as a consequence of the disastrous political economy, of the lack of state incentives, and of the problems stemming from censorship.[18]

The fact that redemocratization meant that by late 1983 films could be made without the restrictions of censorship or the threats of violence against those involved and the fact that the Alfonsín government was willing to provide subsidies provided in a confluence of circumstances affording film as a cultural genre a clearly defined fresh beginning. And the steady economic decline that occurred throughout the Alfonsín period and on into the presidency of Carlos Menem, which began in 1989, translated into the cessation of government subsidies, which itself translated into the effective demise of an independent cinematography driven primarily by creative considerations. The need to turn a profit may not necessarily imply artistic or ideological compromises, but within the overall precarious panorama of Latin American film production it cannot be considered a stimulus either. To judge by the uneven quality of María Luisa Bemberg's 1990 film on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Yo, la peor de todas* (*I, the Worst of All*), which was severely circumscribed by financial difficulties, one must recognize that the momentum of a new, redemocratized Argentine filmmaking is now very much a part of national cultural history.

This temporal circumscription provides the films with a privileged position not readily ascribable to other cultural genres. Of course, no claim can be made for the universal excellence of the several dozen films produced under the aegis of the redemocratization efforts, and a study more devoted to technical and artistic features than the present one might dwell at length on a recurring problem of symbolic pretentiousness and an ill-advised patina of Hollywood-ishness—allegedly part of the attempt to tap into international interest in Argentine and Latin American postdictatorship societies. These are some of the reasons why John King has been able to assert that, as a body, these films constitute an "imperfect cinema."[19] Yet from a strictly ideological frame of reference, the coincidence of this film production with

the period of redemocratization provides it with a particular privilege as a record of the aspirations and limitations of that process. At the same time, one must recognize that the historicization of recent Argentine cinematography is, perhaps, what has limited its attractiveness to international audiences, which are likely to care little for the facts of Argentine history. The analyses herein, while centered on only a limited number of films—those that arguably represent the principal tendencies and recognized successes of their directors—have dealt with the interaction between cinematographic semiosis and the goals of redemocratization to analyze recent and long-range national history, to interpret the social and political forces at play during the dictatorship, and to project the collective and personal mentalities necessary for the shift in Argentine society that can impede the development of future tyrannies. No one can assume, protestations of Nunca más to the contrary, that the military will never come to power again in Argentina. Nor can anyone hope to provoke profound modifications in a country's deeply rooted social structures through a six-year politically based action program. But culture is a slowly evolving and immensely complex process. Because film is, after all, a recent but highly public cultural genre, it may be difficult to see its processes of ideological analysis and social impact from the sort of distanced perspective from which one views canonical genres like poetry or the theater. That is, it is all too easy to expect too much from, and to attribute too much to, a circumscribed production like the moviemaking examined in this study. Yet it can be only through the patient examination of this production that it will eventually be possible to ascertain its historical importance.

Notes

1. Basic position statements include Marcos Aguinis, *Mientras se consolida la democracia* (Buenos Aires: Foundación Demos; Foundación San Telmo, 1985); Javier Torre and Adriana Zaffaroni, "Argentina: Its Culture during the Repression and during the Transition," in *Redemocratization of Argentine Culture, 1983 and Beyond*, edited by David William Foster (Tempe: Arizona State University, Center for Latin American Studies, 1989), pp. 11–21; and Oscar Landi, "Campo cultural y democratización en Argentina," *Políticas culturales en América Latina*, edited by Néstor García Canclini (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1987), pp. 145–73.

2. See, for example, the cultural products analyzed by Aníbal Ford, Jorge B. Rivera, and Eduardo Romano, *Medios de comunicación y cultura popular* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Legasa, 1985.

3. See Aguinis, *Mientras se consolida la democracia*; Mónica Peralta-Ramos and Carlos H. Waisman, eds., *From Military Rule to Liberal Democracy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987); and *Hacia una Argentina posible* (Buenos Aires: Foundación Bolsa de Comercio de Buenos Aires, 1984).

4. Peter B. Schumann, *Historia del cine latinoamericano*, translated from the German by Oscar Zambrano (Buenos Aires: Editorial Legasa, 1987), pp. 38–51; John King and Nissa Torrents, eds., *The Garden of Forking Paths: Argentina Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1988), 74–97.

5. B. Ruby Rich, "An/Other View of New Latin American Cinema," *Iris: revue de théorie de l'image et du son 13 (1991): 5–28.*

6. *Historia del cine argentino*(Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1984).

7. One dimension of economic circumstances in Argentina, alongside the rise of video clubs and home viewing, was the drastic reduction in the number of movie houses. According to statistics released by the Sindicato de la Industria Cinematográfica Argentina, in 1970 there were over 2,000 movie houses in Argentina; by the 1980–1982 period, the number had dropped to 900; in October 1991, there were 427; and in January 1992, there were approximately 380 (Teo Kofman, private communication based on documents in his possession).

8. Teshome H. Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), p. 95.

9. *Porteño* refers to the cultural establishment of Buenos Aires, an international port city.

10. Fernando Birri, "Cinema and Underdevelopment," in *Twenty-five Years of the New Latin American Cinema*, edited by Michael Chanan (London: British Film Institute, 1983), p. 9. The full text of this tract is reprinted in volume one.

11. For example, the papers included in *Ficción y política: la narrative argentina durante el proceso militar*, edited by Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires: Alianza Editorial, and Minneapolis: Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literature, 1987).

12. Carlos Ferreira, *Por un cine libre* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1983).

13. Heriberto Muraro and José G. Cantor Magnani, "La influencia transnacional en el cine argentino," *Comunicación y cultura* 5 (1987): 19–69.

14. D. N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

15. Ibid., 52–54.

16. David William Foster, "Fiction and the Sociopolitical Text: Violence, the Body, and Cultural Responses in Argentine Literature in the Context of Military Tyranny," manuscript in author's possession.

17. David William Foster, "Argentine Sociopolitical Commentary, the Malvinas Conflict, and Beyond: Rhetoricizing a National Experience," *Latin American Research Review* 22, no. 1 (1987): 7–34.

18. Schumann, *Historia del cine latinoamericano*, 35.

19. John King and Nissa Torrents, eds., *The Garden of Forking Paths*, 93.